THE DECOLONISATION AND AFRICANISATION OF ORDINATION IN THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

by

DONALD MURRELL WILLIAMS

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SUPERVISOR: Prof W. Bentley

CO-SUPERVISOR: Prof T. Lephakga

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Declaration

Name: Donald Murrell Williams.

Student number: 0216-097-8

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I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Date: 29 August 2019.

Curriculum Vitae

After matriculating in 1963 and working for three years in a bank, I felt God's call to the presbyteral ministry. On completing a Bachelor of Arts degree through Rhodes University in 1969, majoring in Systematic Theology and Biblical Studies, I was ordained as a presbyter of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in 1972. As an ordained minister, I then served in various Circuits as a presbyter, Superintendent Minister, Supervisor of Studies and a military chaplain for 11 years until retiring from the active ministry in 2011.

In 1982 I was awarded an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree through the University of South Africa and awarded a Master of Theology degree in 2016. The title of the dissertation was 'The covenantal relationship between the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and her ministers: A Wesleyan theological critique'. Arising from the study, an article co-authored with Professor C. Landman and titled 'The experiences of thirteen women ministers of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa', was published in a theological journal. Another article co-authored with Professor W. Bentley and titled 'The covenantal relationship between the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and her ministers' was also published in the same theological journal.

While being a pastor at heart, deep down brewed a concern that the witness of the Christian Church in our southern African context requires suitable adaptations by both the church and the presbyters, concerns that led to the post-graduate studies.

Summary

The doctrine and practices of ordination in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) were adopted from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England when the Southern African Conference was constituted in 1882. This replication, together with the influences of colonialism and a Western epistemology, negatively impacted the ministry and mission of the church. In response to the appeals for the decolonisation and Africanisation of the denomination's practices, aspects relating to both the doctrine and practices of ordination have been adapted from the colonial past to our southern African context. However, many elements remain Western and the food cooking in the African pot lacks the taste of authentic ingredients grown in southern African soil.

The study researches whether a decolonised and Africanised model of ordination would be very different from existing understanding and practices and examines the impact that a new model would have on the MCSA. Drawing from literature and interviews with persons in leadership positions in the MCSA, the study determines those aspects of southern African culture and spirituality that would be appropriate to assimilate into the present doctrine and practices. The liturgy of the Service of Ordination forms the basis on which the contributions of southern African culture are applied to the doctrine and practices of ordination. A similar process of evaluation and assimilation follows when applying the data gained from the interviews to the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA.

The thesis then concludes by proposing concrete changes to both the doctrinal understanding and practice of ordination in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

Sesotho

Dithuto le ditlwaelo tsa ho hlomamiswa ha Kereke ya Methodist ya Afrika e Borwa (MCSA) di ile tsa amohelwa ho tswa Kerekeng ya Methodist ya Wesleyan ya Engelane ha Seboka sa Afrika e Borwa se thehwa ka 1882. Ho ikatisa hona, hammoho le ditshusumetso tsa bokolone le theori ya tsebo ya Bophirima, di amme tshebeletso le mosebetsi wa kereke. Ho arabela dillo bakeng sa ho tloswa ha thuto ya bokolone le Ho etsa dintho Seafrika ha ditlwaelo tsa bodumedi, dikarolo tse amanang le thuto le ditlwaelo tsa tlhomamiso ka bobedi di amohetswe ho tswa bokoloneng bo fetileng hofihlela maemong a rona a hona jwale. Leha ho le jwalo, dintho tse ngata di dutse e ntse e le tsa Bophirima, mme dijo tse ntseng di phehwa ka pitseng ya Afrika di haellwa ke tatso ya metswako e lengwang mobung wa Afrika e Borwa.

Phuputso e batlisisa hore na mmotlolo o tlositsweng tsebo ya bokolone le o etsang dintho Seafrika wa tlhomamiso o ka fapana le kutlwisiso ya hona jwale le ditlwaelo le tshusumetso eo mmotlolo o motjha o ka bang le ona ho MCSA. Ho tswa ho dingodilweng le dipuisano le batho ba boemong ba boetapele ho MCSA, phuputso e lekanya dikarolo tseo tsa setso sa Afrika e Borwa le bomoya bo ka nepahalang ho utlwisisa ka botlalo thuto le ditlwaelo tsa hona jwale. Borapedi ba Tshebeletso ya Tlhomamiso bo etsa motheo oo ho ona diabo tsa setso sa Afrika e Borwa di sebediswang thutong ya tlhomamiso. Tshebetso e tshwanang ya

tlhahlobo le kutlwisiso e phethahetseng dia latela ha ho sebediswa lesedi le fumanweng ho tswa dipuisanong ho thuto le ditlwaelo tsa tlhomamiso ho MCSA.

Phuputso e phethela ka ho etsa tlhahiso ya diphetoho tse hlakileng kutlwisisong ya thuto le tlwaelong ya tlhomamiso Kerekeng ya Methodist ya Afrika e Borwa ka bobedi.

IsiZulu

Inqubo kanye nezinkambiso zokugcotshwa kwabefundisi eBandleni lamaWeseli, i-*Methodist Church of Southern Africa* (MCSA) kwathathelwa ebandleni i-*Wesleyan Methodist Church* eNgilandi ngenkathi kusungulwa i-*Southern African Conference* ngowe-1882. Ukwamukelwa kwenqubo leyo nezinkambiso, kanye nemithelela yenqubo yobukoloniyali, nokugxila kakhulu olwazini lwaseNtshonalanga, kwaba nomthelela omubi impela emsebenzini webandla wokuhambisa nokusabalalisa ivangeli. Njengomzamo wokusabela ezikhalazweni nezicelo zokuthi kushiywe phansi izinkambiso nezinqubo ezihlobene nenqubo yobukoloniyali futhi ebandleni kusetshenziswe izinkambiso ezisungulwe kwizwekazi lase-Afrika futhi ezihambelana kahle naleli zwekazi, sekuguqulwe izingxenye ezithile ezihlobene nenqubo kanye nezinkambiso zokugcotshwa kwabefundisi zisuswa esimweni sazo esedlule ebesihlobene nenqubo yobukoloniyali, futhi esezakhiwe ngendlela ezozwana futhi ihambelane kahle nesimo samanje esiphila kusona. Kodwa-ke, kusekuningi kakhulu okuphathelene nalezi zinkambiso okusagxile kakhulu ezinqubweni zaseNtshonalanga, futhi lokho-ke kubangela ukuthi ‘isitshulu esiphekwe ebhodweni lase-Afrika sizwakale singenakho ukunambitheka kwezithako ezilinywe emhlabathini waseNingizimu ye-Afrika’.

Lolu cwaningo luzama ukuthola ukuthi inqubo yokugcoba abefundisi engalandeli izinkambiso zobukoloniyali zamazwe aseNtshonalanga futhi okuyinqubo egxile ezinkambisweni zase-Afrika ingaba nawo yini umehluko omkhulu kulokhu kuqonda okukhona njengamanje kanye nezinkambiso ezilandelwayo esikhathini samanje, futhi luzama ukubheka nomthelela ebingaba nawo inqubo entsha ebandleni i-MCSA. Ngokususela emibhalweni efundiwe kanye nezingxoxo ezibanjwe nabantu abasezikhundleni zobuholi ebandleni i-MCSA, ucwaningo luhlonza lezo zingxenye zosiko-mpilo kanye nezinkolelo ezingokomoya zaseNingizimu ye-Afrika ezingakulungela ukulunjaniswa nofakwa ngaphansi kwenqubo nezinkambiso ezilandelwa esikhathini samanje. Izinqubonkambiso kanye nemidanti yeNkonzo Yokugcotshwa Kwabefundisi kwakha isisekelo okusetshenziselwa phezu kwaso izinqubo ezithile, ezithathwe kusiko-mpilo lweNingizimu ye-Afrika, enqubweni yokugcotshwa kwabefundisi. Inqubo efanayo yokuhlola nokulumbanisa iyalandela ngenkathi kusetshenziswa idatha etholakale ezingxoxweni ezibanjwe nababambiqhaza bocwaningo mayelana nenqubo kanye nezinkambiso zokugcotshwa kwabefundisi ebandleni i-MCSA.

Lo mbhalo wocwaningo uphetha ngokuthi uphakamise izinguquko eziphathekayo futhi ezinohlonze ezingenziwa kukho kokubili inqubo-kuqonda kanye nenkambiso yokugcotshwa kwabefundisi ebandleni i-*Methodist Church of Southern Africa*.

Key Terms

Africanisation; decolonisation; ordination; feminism; marginalisation of women; Methodist Church of Southern Africa; patriarchy; presbytery; Wesleyan theology; women in ministry.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations will be used in the study:

AME African Methodist Episcopal Church

BMC Black Methodist Consultation

DEWCOM Doctrine, Ethics and Worship Committee

EMMU Education for Ministry and Mission Unit

Fedsem Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa

JNL Journey to the New Land Convocation

L&D Methodist Book of Order: The Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa

MCSA Methodist Church of Southern Africa

MethSA Methodist Church of South Africa

SMMS – Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary

WMC Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa

WMMS Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background and introduction

Having completed a MTh dissertation in 2015 researching the covenantal relationship entered into between the Methodist Church of Southern Africa[1] (MCSA) and her ministers on their ordination, the question arose as to how the colonial past has influenced the understanding of the doctrine of the ordination of presbyters[2] and their ministry of the MCSA. While serving as a presbyter in the MCSA, I experienced the negative impact of colonialism on presbyters, particularly black persons, as well as its impact on the structures, governance and dominant narrative within the church. Arising from the colonial heritage was the cry for transformation from the white, male, Western, colonial narrative and domination to a more inclusive policy and polity, incorporating African thinking, leadership and practices. This would be in keeping with the church's desire to be "an authentic African Church" (MCSA 1994:376). A similar appeal relating to the decolonisation and Africanisation of the doctrine and practices of ordination arose, remembering that, in the ecclesiology of the MCSA, ordination sets presbyters apart to the ministry of Word and Sacraments (MCSA 2016a:17).

Neither the impact of the colonial heritage on the doctrine of ordination in the MCSA nor the contribution offered by African culture and African spirituality to a decolonised doctrine and practices of ordination has been researched. This study is relevant in the light of the call for decolonisation and Africanisation from within the church and southern African society.[3] My contribution is to research whether the adaptations to the doctrine and practices of the ordination of the MCSA that have taken place are adequate for our southern African context. This study will, therefore, complement my previous research into the relationship established between a presbyter and the MCSA on ordination.

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[1] The Methodist Church of Southern Africa is referred to in the remainder of this text as MCSA.

[2] The terms 'minister' and 'presbyter' are used interchangeably to describe an ordained clergy person in the MCSA. I will be using the term 'presbyter' to specifically denote a clergy person who has been ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacraments.

[3] I will be using the term 'southern Africa', written without a capital, as an adjective to indicate the geographical location on the African continent but with a capital when part of a name or title of the church, as in 'Southern African Conference'.

1.2 The cooking pot for the doctrine of ordination of the MCSA

In his address to the Connexional Executive of the MCSA in 2006, the Presiding Bishop, Rev Ivan Abrahams (Abrahams 2007:5-12), asked "What it means to be a Church in 21st century Africa?" (Abrahams 2007:7). His response to this question was "the salutary call for our theology to be homebrewed, cooked in African pots" (2007:7). Abrahams was drawing an analogy between the familiar object of the African cooking pot and the church, suitably adapted to an African context. African pots were originally constructed from earthen material or carved out of wood but in more recent times denote three-legged cast iron pots. It is into these pots that the ingredients are placed to be cooked by the coals formed from the branches collected in the fields by the women and carried on their heads to their homes. It is around the pots that African people "build and consolidate relationships" (Gundani 1998:2) in times of "happiness or sorrow, in peace or war, at work or leisure, indeed wherever two or three meet for a purpose" (1998:2). In African culture, these pots are also "icons of sacredness. These vessels participate in connecting the living and the dead and God. This is why they are made available for use at all sacred occasions in the life of many Africans" (1998:2).

The analogy of preparing the ingredients, cooking them in the African pot and then presenting the meal in an African manner informed the writing of the book *Theology cooked in an African pot* (eds Fiedler, Gundani & Mijoga 1998), which introduced a new understanding and expression of African Christian theology. In keeping with their intention, this metaphor is borrowed by Bishop Abrahams (Abrahams 2007:7) in his address to the Conference of 2006. The analogy of the cooking pot is used extensively in this study to evaluate and describe the Africanisation of the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA. The pot is likened to the ecclesiology of the MCSA and the ingredients being placed into the pot to produce the meal represent the doctrine of ordination and its practices as determined by the Conference.

As the study specifically relates to the MCSA, a brief overview of the structures of the denomination will assist in understanding how the doctrine is "cooked" in the African pot. The Connexion, spelt in this manner, describes the Methodist denomination in a particular context, comprising a number of Synods. The Conference is the ultimate authority, policy-forming forum and decision-making body of the Southern African Connexion of the Methodist Church. It is presided over by the Presiding Bishop and "provides direction and inspiration for the Church and is the Church's governing authority and supreme legislative body" (MCSA 2016a:53).

The Connexional Executive has "general oversight of the administration and management of the Connexion acting on behalf of Conference, especially implementing the lead and direction set by the Conference for the Connexion" (2016a:61). It is the Connexional Executive which accepts candidates for the ministry, assesses their progress through their period of probation, approves candidates for ordination and finalises the stationing of presbyters on their recommendations to the Conference for their ratification.

While the adoption of policy is the preserve of the Annual Conference, the everyday business of the MCSA relating to "the Mission of the Church at Connexional, District and Circuit level" (2016a:89) is delegated to units who report to the Connexional Executive and the Conference. The units of the MCSA comprise the Communications Unit, the Ecumenical Affairs Unit, the Education for Ministry and Mission Unit, the Finance Unit, the Human Resources Unit, the Mission Unit and the Youth Unit [4] (MCSA 2016a:89). The reports and recommendations of the various units often lead to amendments to policy by the Conference, as for example by the Education for Ministry and Mission Unit (EMMU) relating to the formation and ordination of presbyters.

The Conference is comprised of a number of Districts, known as Synods from 2019, presided over by the Bishop of the District/Synod.[5] "The area under the jurisdiction of Conference is divided into Districts that are associations of local Circuits as determined by Conference" (2016a:64). The Districts/Synods are comprised of a number of circuits with a Superintendent Minister and Circuit Stewards who act on behalf of the Circuit Quarterly Meeting. "Circuits oversee and coordinate the work of Societies and promote and ensure the implementation of mission imperatives throughout the Circuit" (2016a:73). The circuits are comprised of a number of societies with a clergy person and Society Stewards acting on behalf of the Society Leaders' Meeting. The Conference, Synods, Circuit Quarterly Meetings and Society Leaders' Meeting are constituted of both clergy and lay persons "comprised of at least 40% women and 20% of youth (aged under 35 years)" (MCSA 2019a:84). A person who feels called by God to the ordained ministry is required to have that call assessed at the Society Leaders' Meeting, the Circuit Quarterly Meeting and the Annual Synod, all of which comprise both clergy and laity.

[4] The Youth Unit was renamed the Methodist Children and Youth Unit in 2018 (MCSA 2019a:88).
[5] As the change in name from a District to a Synod came into operation in 2019 in the MCSA, references from earlier than that date will include the word 'District' in references quoted and when referring to that structure prior to 2019.

1.3 The formation of the doctrine and practices of ordination in the Southern African Connexion

The Methodist work in southern Africa was initiated by the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England through the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) in the early 1800s among the British settlers and the indigenous people of southern Africa. The missionaries were ordained presbyters who were accountable to the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England for their discipline, conduct, doctrine and their stationing to a circuit. They "were expected to transplant English Methodism in alien soil" (Cragg 2011:25) and were instructed to "keep closely to the model exhibited by your Brethren at home" (Vickers 1988:381).

The Methodist work in southern Africa was a missionary outreach by the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England with the districts being accountable to that Conference. The work was financially supported by England until 1888 "after which it would be reduced by 10% a year in colonial circuits and 5% a year in the case of missions" (Cragg 2011:179-180). This financial arrangement did not apply to the Transvaal District which remained a "missionary district of the British Conference until 1930" (2011:180).

In 1882 the Conference in England agreed to the establishment of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa (WMC) with the first Conference being held in 1883.[6] The constitution of the Methodist Church in England was adopted into the southern African context duplicating the English ecclesiology, governance, practices and liturgies. The doctrine of ordination, the procedures from candidature to ordination and the accountability of presbyters to the Conference duplicated those of the Methodist Church in England.

These policies and procedures were set down in the Plan and Constitution of the South African Conference adopted by the British Conference of 1882 (Wesleyan Methodist Church 1883:iii-xii). This arrangement continued until the passing of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa (Private Act) of 1927 when the South African Conference "became an independent and autonomous body in full control of all its Members and Properties" (MethSA 1946:312). New legislation was no longer required to be referred to the British Conference for their approval (1946:312).

[6] Only matters of "new legislation" were required to be referred to the Yearly Conference in England for their approval (MethSA 1946:313).

The intention of the British Conference included the raising up of an indigenous clergy while replicating the organisational structures of that Conference. However, whether intentional or not, numerous varieties of colonial ingredients impacted the flavour of the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination brewing in the pot of the Southern African Connexion. The colonial mindset of the supremacy of their European culture and a sense of superiority over the indigenous people was the experience of the African people. Madise and Taunyane (2012) indicate that class structures adopted from English society were perpetuated in South Africa (Madise & Taunyane 2012:9).[7] In addition, European perceptions constructed the indigenous people as heathen. Curnick (1923:1-10) characterises the indigenous people by declaring that:

1. They lack a true sense of sin and of their responsibility before God, and so do not realise their need for a Saviour.
2. They live a sensual, selfish life… Polygamy is maintained.
3. They are addicted to strong drink.
4. And always, over heathenism there is the close intricately woven network of custom which dare not be broken without rendering the individual liable to the dread charge of witchcraft" (Curnick 1923:7).[8]

Authors such as Boyce (1839), Eveleigh (1923) and Fast (1991) indicate that many missionaries approached the indigenous people with a sense of superiority, rejecting many of their traditional values, religious beliefs and cultural practices such as paying lobola,[9] the rituals of *Sangomas*,[10] belief in the ancestors [11] and their cleansing ceremonies. "Customary rituals of rainmaking,[12] initiation ceremonies and polygamy were vehemently opposed and were regarded as heathen and a hindrance towards acceptance of the gospel and civilization" (Ketshabile 2012:123). One of the consequences of the colonial mindset was a paucity of indigenous religious and cultural beliefs, practices and traditions being incorporated into the ecclesiology and practices of the Methodist movement.

The sense of superiority towards and marginalisation of the indigenous people was compounded both by a reluctance to ordain indigenous preachers and to appoint them to positions of leadership. The developing practices led to separate training facilities for white

[7] See also Hodgson 1997:78-81.
[8] See also Elbourne & Ross 1997:47 and Whiteside 1906:171-176.
[9] *Lobola* is an African custom by which a bridegroom's family makes a payment in cattle or cash to the bride's family shortly before the marriage. (Viewed at https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/lobola.
[10] A *Sangoma* is a traditional healer or diviner.
(Viewed at https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sangoma).
[11] Nürnberger (2007) describes ancestors thus: "The ancestors are superiors whose vitality has lapsed, but whose authority and power are enhanced. Ancestors are the primary religious counterparts of the living. They watch over the inherited traditions, punish transgressors and bless their offspring. While they have more dynamic power than the living, they are not omnipotent" (Nürnberger 2007:54).
[12] These ceremonies were conducted to counter the effects of drought and pests on the well-being of the people. (Ketshabile 2012:43-44).

and black probationer ministers, the separation of circuits and the holding of synods and ordination services according to ethnicity. It is significant that discrimination was not only based on ethnicity but also existed on the grounds of gender, with female persons not being accepted into the ordained ministry.

The problem is that, even though the MCSA was independent of the British Conference from 1882, the colonial, Western ecclesiology, epistemology, influences and perceptions adopted by the Conference impacted the structures and attitudes to indigenous people and their role in ministry. They also influenced the policies, practices and doctrines of the Methodist movement in southern Africa. Consequently, the colonial narrative within the southern African Connexion was one of the superiority of a Western epistemology over an African epistemology; the dominance of white clergy over black clergy; white leadership preferred to black leadership; with male domination and the powers of Conference over presbyters. It is the residue of those influences which continue to impact the Southern African Connexion into the 21st century that will be examined in this study.

In spite of some adaptations having taken place, it appears very difficult for the MCSA to rid itself of the prevalent colonial Western narrative and to incorporate an African epistemology. There is a dissonance between the declared intention of the MCSA to be "an authentic African Church" (MCSA 1994:376) and for "our theology and practices to be homebrewed cooked in African pots" (MCSA 2006:15) and the experience of presbyters and the formulations, practices, structures and the dominant narrative which remain very Western and colonial. While the vision of the MCSA is "A Christ-healed Africa for the healing of nations" (MCSA 2019a:2), this is not the reality experienced within the Southern African Connexion. The African context of the MCSA's ministry does not appear to be reflected in our theology and practices.

The appeal for the decolonisation and Africanisation of the theology of ordination in the MCSA is, therefore, justified and appropriate. This study will examine those influences which continue to dominate the Southern African Connexion into the 21st century. It is important to record, however, that associated with the detrimental colonial influences African cultural influences also existed that were equally damaging, and their role also needs to be examined.

Methodist history in England and southern Africa records that the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination in the Methodist Church are not static and have undergone adaptations to meet

the changing circumstances and missional needs during the establishment of the work in England and in southern Africa. These adaptations have been to the doctrine and the practices associated with ordination and have included the abolition of discrimination in the formation of presbyters, ordination services based on ethnicity, the inclusion of women as presbyters and their appointment to positions of leadership in the church.[13] However, those calling for the decolonisation of ordination in the MCSA believe that the church has not adapted sufficiently to the African context and missional needs and that the outdated and discredited colonial narrative continues to influence the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination as it is presently constituted.

1.4 The research problem

The ecclesiology of the MCSA is founded on the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers,[14] which holds that all Christians are called to share in Christ's ministry to establish the Kingdom of God. Within the priesthood of all believers, the MCSA holds that God calls, equips and empowers individual persons to be set aside and ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacraments (MCSA 2016a:17).[15] Ordained persons participate in the ministry of the universal Church in a particular way and are charged by the Presiding Bishop to "Take authority for the office and work of a minister in the Church of Christ. Receive the Scriptures and bear witness by word and deed in the Church and in the world" (MCSA 2018d:5). Prior to their ordination, the courts of the church confirm the candidates' belief that God has called them to the ordained ministry, to undergo a period of formation and training at the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS) and in a circuit before being accepted into Full Connexion[16] with the Conference. Presbyters also enter into a covenantal relationship with the Conference, remembering that the Conference is the "final authority within the Church with regard to its doctrines and all questions concerning the interpretation of its doctrines" (MCSA 2016a:13). It is the Conference which authorises the ordination of the presbyters by

[13] I will be using the word 'church' to refer to the church as a denominational institution and 'Church' to the people of God and when referring specifically to a religious grouping.
[14] The phrase 'the universal priesthood of believers' is used in some documents of the MCSA in addition to the phrase 'the priesthood of all believers'.
[15] Deacons are also ordained by the imposition of hands and prayer to the ministry of Word and Service as distinct from presbyters who are ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacraments. Deacons are, consequently, not permitted to preside at the celebration of the sacraments.
[16] The term 'Full Connexion' describes the relationship entered into between the presbyter and the Conference. There is no consistency in using capitals to begin each word, with some authors using 'full connexion' and others 'Full Connexion'. I will be using uppercase except when the words 'full connexion' are contained in a reference quoted.

the imposition of hands of previously ordained presbyters and a prayer to the Holy Spirit. Presbyters are stationed by the Conference and authorised to exercise their ministry under the direction of and accountability to the Conference.

Ordination is not into the MCSA but into the Church of Christ with the presbyters committing themselves to the discipline and authority of the Conference as well as the teachings of the MCSA. They are also accepted into Full Connexion with the Conference by means of which they enter into a "covenantal relationship" with the Conference. The term "covenantal relationship" was first recorded in the MCSA in 2001 on the candidates' Application Form (EMMU 2001) for the ordained ministry.

In addition to these essentials of the doctrine of ordination are various practices associated with ordination that were introduced into the southern African context; practices arising from, among others, a missionary context, discrimination, marginalisation, a Western narrative, separated formation and patriarchy. An example was the holding of separate ordination services according to ethnicity. These practices became problematic as they were discriminatory and ensured that a colonial narrative remained embedded in the African Connexion. The cry has been for those elements to be amended together with the assimilation of elements from southern African culture.

With the research question being stated as: Have the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA been effectively adapted from our colonial past to our Southern African context?, the objective of the research is to determine whether a decolonised and Africanised ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination would be very different and more appropriate from the present formulations and practices. It is for this reason that the title of the research is: The decolonisation and Africanisation of ordination in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

The study will also evaluate whether all African customs are applicable for inclusion in the Africanised doctrine of the MCSA. The Mission Congress of 2004 provided a useful measuring staff for the MCSA indicating that some cultural practices are suitable, as for example "the acceptance of Sangomas (traditional African healers) but only those whose practices do not conflict with the gospel. Those that use bones and human flesh would not be acceptable, but those who seek healing in the name of Jesus Christ would be accepted" (Vika 2008:63). Similar rulings are necessary relating to the contribution which African spirituality and African culture could contribute in areas relating to education and formation, consultative leadership and governance, cultural emphases such as inclusiveness, humanism,

communalism and African feminism as well as those of ritual and the relationship with those who have gone before us. Just as colonialism possessed qualities which were destructive and unhelpful, authors including Magezi (2015), Mbiti (1969) and Mtshiselwa (2015b:1-9) warn that African concepts, such as chieftainship, paternalism, power and male dominance, are also open to abuse. Fanon (1963) and Johnson (2013) *et al* also caution against leadership in decolonised settings repeating the errors of the past. The new model must, therefore, ensure that there is no abuse by any culture, epistemology and ethnic grouping or by those in leadership in the MCSA.

My contribution is to evaluate the impact of the assimilation of aspects of southern African culture in the Africanising of ordination and its practices in the MCSA; what an Africanised model of the doctrine of ordination will look like; the implications of such a change; and the manner of implementing the changes.

The methodology for the research is a theoretical literary study of published and unpublished works relating to the theology, doctrines and practices of ordination in the Methodist Church; the history of the Methodist work in the Southern African Connexion; the appeals for a decolonised and Africanised doctrine of ordination in the MCSA and aspects offered by southern African culture that could be assimilated into the doctrine and practices. The literature study is supplemented by interviews with eight significant leaders in the MCSA in order to gain their understanding and to clarify the position of the MCSA in relation to the research question. This research is, therefore, a theological literary study within the discipline of ecclesiology, in the field of systematic theology and has not been previously undertaken.

The challenge is, therefore, that the MCSA formulate an Africanised model of ordination that is theologically sound, restorative and reconciliatory while taking into account the richness of both the received ecclesiology of the Methodist denomination and African spirituality and customs. In addition, the model must lead to increased missional effectiveness of the church and transformed institutional culture and narrative by the Conference, synods, circuits, presbyters and laity. The model should be contextual and deal with structural and resource imbalances, inequalities and injustices as well as the powers of Conference. Further amendments will need to be made to both our doctrine and practices associated with ordination. Our beliefs and practices must be in keeping with the call to be “an authentic African Church” (MCSA 1994:376) in which our doctrine is shaped by an African as well as a Western narrative.

1.5 Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study is that, if the mission of the MCSA is to be optimally effective as an authentic southern African church, then the theology and practices regarding ordination need to be amended to assimilate relevant aspects of southern African culture, African spirituality and an African narrative as important sources of knowledge, beliefs and practices.

My present understanding is that, when the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination, together with their associated practices, are "cooked" in African pots, there may be many features consistent with the present ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination. However, it is evident that southern African spirituality and culture are not sufficiently incorporated into the ecclesiology, doctrines and practices of the MCSA. Changes are vital: the destructive features inherited from our colonial past need to be expunged while appropriate African epistemology and cultural elements need to be incorporated into our doctrines and practices.

The hypothesis is tested by means of a theoretical literary study supplemented by consultations with significant leaders in the MCSA in order to answer the research question which is stated as: Have the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA been effectively adapted from our colonial past to our southern African context? The methodology to be followed is more fully described in the following paragraphs.

1.6 Methodology

The research method is a theoretical literary study, which places the research question in the discipline of theology. Where clarification of the literary data is required, the literature study was supplemented by interviews and email correspondence with persons who hold leadership positions in the MCSA.

The literature study of both primary and secondary sources from published and unpublished works was conducted to establish the historical and current theological understanding of ordination and the associated practices in the Methodist Church. The study determines the influences of the Rev John Wesley and the developments in the formation of the doctrine of ordination in the Methodist movement that culminated in the ordination of presbyters in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England. A similar process was followed by examining the developments in the doctrine and practices of ordination from the establishment of the Southern African Conference in 1882 to the present. This study identifies the essential elements incorporated into the Methodist doctrine of ordination.

The literature was examined in order to determine the formation, adaptations and impact of the colonial doctrine and practices on Methodist work in southern Africa together with the appeals for a decolonised and Africanised doctrine of ordination. Aspects of southern African culture and spirituality that could be assimilated into an Africanised doctrine and Africanised practices of ordination were also determined.

In order to shed light on areas identified in the literary study needing clarification and further attention, interviews were conducted with significant leaders and theologians in the MCSA in person, at their location, telephonically or by email. Their wisdom on these matters as well as on Africanising the doctrine and practices was pursued. The required ethical approval for this research was sought and obtained from Unisa. All the stipulations on the Research Ethics Certificate were honoured before, during and following the interviews which took place.

The criteria for approaching persons to be interviewed were that each was to be an ordained presbyter, in good standing with the MCSA, presently serving in a leadership position in the MCSA, with institutional knowledge and competence to clarify the specific matters related to their specific role in the church. The sample included men and women as well as black and white presbyters. Additional insights from each participant on the decolonisation and Africanisation of ordination were also considered. The supplementary data gained from the interviews both informed the data gained from the literary study and provided additional and not recorded data for consideration in evaluating the hypothesis of the study.

1.6.1 Literature overview

The primary sources consulted for this study include the Bible, *Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa***,** now known as the Methodist Book of Order: The Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA 2016a)[17] and editions of the annual Yearbook,[18] previously known as the Minutes of Conference[19] of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa (WMC), then the Methodist Church of South Africa (MethSA) and presently the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). The *Book of Order* (2016a) regulates every aspect of the MCSA's life and ministry including its doctrinal beliefs and polity relating to those who feel called by God to serve as ordained presbyters.

[17] The *Methodist Book of Order: The Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa* will be titled *Book of Order* from this reference onwards.
[18] The *Yearbook: The Methodist Church of Southern Africa* will be titled *Yearbook* from this reference onwards.
[19] The *Minutes of Conference* will be titled *Minutes* from this reference onwards.

The annual Yearbook records the decisions of the annual Conference, amendments to the *Book of Order* (2016a) and reports tabled at the annual Conference, serving as an extension of the *Book of Order* (2016a). The *Constitutions of the Organisations* (MCSA 2018e), liturgies of Ordination Services of the MCSA and statements released by the Office of the Presiding Bishop were also consulted as primary sources. The Bible serves as the record of God calling the Church to mission extending the kingdom of God and serves as the standard against which the ecclesiology and mission of the MCSA will be measured.

Primary sources were also consulted relating to the establishment of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England, the Minutes of their Conferences and the theology, ecclesiology and polity of Rev John Wesley as recorded in his Diary, Journals, Letters and publications. This information is recorded, for example, in the volumes of the *Works of John Wesley* and in the volumes of *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*.

The secondary sources consulted include written and electronic publications, journal articles, papers presented to the Doctrine, Ethics and Worship Committee (DEWCOM) of the MCSA, presentations to the annual Conference and Congresses of the MCSA together with statements and documents released by the Office of the Presiding Bishop of the MCSA. Other sources include reports and minutes of organisations such as the BMC and Women in Ministry Consultations, theses, private papers, and newspaper articles.

The primary and secondary sources clarify Methodist ecclesiology, the doctrine and practices of ordination, the impact of colonialism, the demand for decolonisation and to determine what African culture and spirituality offer in the Africanisation of ordination in the MCSA. The reading of primary and secondary sources places the research in the context of the ecclesiology of the MCSA with the primary focus on five areas relating to:

- The ecclesiology, doctrine and practices of ordination in the Methodist movement from the inception of the denomination by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in Southern Africa to the present, placing the research in its macro context.
- The seeds of colonialism sown in southern African soil from the establishment of the Southern African Connexion to date, placing the research into its southern African context.
- The impact of the colonial seeds germinating and the effect of the ingredients being added to the southern African cooking pot, contextualising the research in the MCSA.
- The appeal for decolonisation and Africanisation in southern African society and the MCSA, in recognition of the necessity for the doctrine of ordination to be decolonised.

- The contribution that African culture, African spirituality and African theology could make to the African cooking pot in order to transform the MCSA into "an authentic African Church" (MCSA 1994:376).

The literary sources used for this study were readily available in the Unisa library, courtesy of the librarians of the Unisa library, and include personal papers and book collections of Methodist presbyters and the results of internet searches. Permission was granted by the General Secretary of the MCSA to quote and reference documentation relating to the MCSA, including the *Book of Order* (2016a) and *Yearbooks*. The quality of the sources of data is, therefore, trustworthy for research purposes.

1.6.2 Interviews with significant leaders in the MCSA

Interviews were conducted with eight presbyters in a leadership role in the MCSA to supplement or clarify data gained from the literary study. Four presbyters who had served either as the Presiding Bishop or as the General Secretary of the MCSA were approached in order to gain their insights and to learn from their experience and wisdom. Bishop Abrahams served as Presiding Bishop from 2005-2011 and at the time of this study was serving as the General Secretary of the World Methodist Council. Bishop Siwa's term as Presiding Bishop had run from 2012 and would continue until the Conference of 2019. Revs Nyobole and Morgan served as General Secretaries of the MCSA from 2005 to 2019. The knowledge, experience and insights into the issues facing the MCSA of these persons who have served in the highest offices of the MCSA over many years were invaluable in helping to clarify the research question and to determine the accuracy of the hypothesis of the study.

With the formation of presbyters being fundamental to the Africanisation of ordination, it is important to gain the perspectives of those in leadership relating to the formation of presbyters at seminary and following their ordination. Accordingly, the Director of the Education for Ministry and Mission Unit, Rev Malinga, was consulted, together with the acting President, Rev Nyobole, and the Dean of the Chapel and Head of Formation at the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS), Rev Sifo, in order to benefit from their insights and hands-on experience.

As the concept of Africanisation is crucial to this study, the perspective of the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC) was of utmost importance, remembering that their influence has been recorded from the mid-1970s. An interview with their Chairman, Rev Molo, was

held to review their past, present and future concerns and their possible contributions to the Africanisation project.

The perspective of a serving bishop in a synod comprising ordained and supernumerary presbyters, probationer ministers and one that is comprised predominantly of black members and black presbyters were gained from Bishop Mntambo of the Limpopo Synod.

1.6.2.1 Interview sample

The eight presbyters in leadership that were identified as having an insight into the research topic were approached telephonically and in writing to participate in the study. The approach and information letter is attached as Attachment 1. Prior to the interview, the participants completed the Biographic Details form, which is attached as Attachment 2, and the Consent to participate in this study form, which is attached as Attachment 3.

These conversations were conducted with the written consent of each participant, in their own location or by means of a recorded telephonic interview. The required informed consent and the logistical and ethical requirements were attended to, including permission to take notes and to record the interviews which the researcher then transcribed. Their permission to utilise their data in the thesis and any possible future articles was also obtained, as was written permission to incorporate the information gained by means of email exchanges. At the conclusion of the interviews, an opportunity was provided for all participants to raise any matters of concern or unresolved issues they wished to have clarified.

1.6.2.2 The discussion topics and interview questions

Because the interviews were a supplementary source of data, the questions asked of each person were specific to their position in leadership in the MCSA and not generic to all participants. However, in addition to the questions for clarity posed to the individual participants, their insights were sought on three focus areas: their understanding and experience of the doctrine and practices of ordination; the need for decolonisation and Africanisation in the MCSA; and how African culture and spirituality could enhance the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA. The discussion topics and sample questions are attached as Attachment 4.

1.6.2.3 Analysis and evaluation of the data

A theological/philosophical approach of analysis and evaluation of the data from the literary sources was used. The data for each focus area were grouped into themes for evaluation and analysis. The themes were subjected to theological reflection and appraisal in order to formulate the findings and determine gaps in the literary sources which needed clarification by means of interviews or email correspondence.

The information gained from the interviews and/or correspondence was analysed and evaluated beginning with the researcher's transcription of the recordings and use of the notes taken during the interviews for clarification purposes. As each participant was clarifying a theme or answering a question arising from the literature study, a theological/philosophical approach was used to analyse their responses in order to extract the relevant contribution of the supplementary data relevant to each theme. A similar process was followed relating to the three focus areas and then incorporating that data into the themes established during the literature study. The enhanced themes were again subjected to theological reflection and appraisal in order to formulate the findings for inclusion in the thesis.

One of the questions in the Consent to participate in this study form (Attachment 3) which participants were asked to clarify was stated as "I wish/do not wish to preview the relevant portions pertaining to my contribution for comment or correction". The request by those persons who wished to preview their recorded responses was honoured.

In analysing the literary data presently at my disposal, I came to two preliminary findings. The first was that our colonial heritage has, consciously and unconsciously, negatively influenced the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA, the mindset of presbyters as well as the mission and outreach of the MCSA. It is my present understanding that, while our doctrine and practices of ordination include much that is theologically sound and in keeping with Scripture, Methodist tradition, policy and praxis, some of our associated practices are inappropriate and need to be amended. The second was that important elements in African culture and spirituality were lacking in existing formulations and praxis. The planned research would either support or amend these preliminary findings in answering the research question: have the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA been effectively adapted from our colonial past to our southern African context?

As, historically, the doctrine of ordination in the Methodist tradition is not static and allows for amendments to be considered and recommendations made to amend the *Book of Order*

(MCSA 2016a), the outcome of the study would need to be considered by the relevant structures of the MCSA for possible amendments to be adopted by the Conference.

1.7 Outline of the study

A breakdown of the chapters of this study with their accompanying areas of focus follows:

This first chapter serves as the introduction to the research project and delineates the study by presenting the formation of the doctrines and practices of ordination in the MCSA. It describes the research problem and clarifies certain terms to be used in the context of this study. It provides a roadmap as to the methodology used to engage with the research question with the aim of testing and either proving or disproving the hypothesis.

Chapter 2 presents a short history of the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination in the Methodist movement. The intention is to demonstrate that the ecclesiology and the doctrine of ordination in the Methodist movement, both in England and southern Africa, have been influenced by historical and circumstantial factors. The examination of the doctrine and practice of ordination will show that these have constantly been adapted to meet the demands of the situations and the needs of people. The chapter will place the study in its macro context.

Chapter 3 examines whether the MCSA has adapted its doctrine of ordination from our colonial past to our current southern African context. Five areas are examined where our colonial narrative and policies continue to influence our ecclesiology, doctrine and practices. The analysis indicates that the doctrine and practices of the MCSA remain closely aligned with our colonial heritage and need to be Africanised. There is also a blurring of the lines between the intentions of the Conference and what happens in practice.

Chapter 4 investigates the calls for decolonisation and Africanisation in the MCSA, describes the dominant features of Africanisation, the formation of presbyters and the contributions which southern African culture has to offer in the Africanisation project. The formation of presbyters and how the doctrine and practices could be applied differently within the MCSA are determined in order that the MCSA becomes “an authentic African Church” (MCSA 1994:376). The chapter recognises the necessity for the doctrine of ordination to be Africanised and for southern African culture and spirituality to be incorporated into existing doctrine and practice.

Chapters 5 and 6 draw the distinction between the Africanisation of the doctrine and the practices of ordination. Chapter 5, using the liturgy of the Ordination Service of 2018 (MCSA 2018d:1-11), describes the doctrinal aspects of the doctrine of ordination. Each element is evaluated as to whether the theological ingredients being placed into the African cooking pot are sufficiently adapted from our colonial past to our African context and, if not, to determine the challenges.

Chapter 6 evaluates the effectiveness of the Africanisation of the practices associated with ordination and determines how applying aspects of our southern African culture and spirituality to the practices of ordination will further assist in adapting the doctrine of ordination being "cooked" in the African pot. Thereafter, important aspects relating to an Africanised model of ordination and its practices are expressed.

Chapter 7 draws the study to a close by presenting the conclusions reached when testing the hypothesis against the research question, the implications of adopting an Africanised model and what steps need to be taken in order to implement the new model. The conclusions include that adaptations to the doctrine of ordination are permissible in terms of Methodist polity, reminding us that the doctrine of ordination is not static. Our present formulations, practices and epistemology remain close to those inherited from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England and, therefore, require further adaptation. Southern African culture and spirituality are not adequately incorporated into the present model and are not at variance with the essential elements contained in the doctrine and practices of ordination. With their assimilation, both the doctrine and the practices of ordination will be more effectively adapted to our southern African context. In addition, the witness and mission of the MCSA as an "authentic African church" (MCSA 1994:376) will be greatly enhanced. All proposals for further adaptations will be required to be placed before the Conference for their acceptance and implementation.

Chapter 2

A short history of the ecclesiology and the doctrine of ordination in the Methodist movement

The ecclesiology of the Methodist movement is one of constant evolution in response to the historical, political and religious environment in which it finds itself. What began as a revival movement within the Church of England slowly developed into a separately identifiable entity under the oversight of John Wesley and then the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. The first ordination of presbyters by Wesley in 1784 was followed by ordinations authorised by the Conference. The theology and practice of ordination of both Wesley[20] and the Methodist movement were constantly adapting and changing to meet the needs of the people and the demands of the new circumstances while remaining faithful to certain essential elements. Similar processes and adaptations are recorded in the Methodist movement in southern Africa.

By means of a historical overview, the various factors influencing the developing doctrine and practices of ordination in England and in southern Africa will be described in this chapter. This overview will provide an understanding of the methodology by which the doctrine of ordination has been adapted and formulated in the Methodist tradition to meet changed circumstances and the needs of people. An evaluation of that overview will give an indication of how consistent the doctrine and practices have remained in spite of becoming established as a denomination on southern African soil. The chapter will conclude with a resume of the essential elements constituting the doctrine of ordination in the MCSA.

[20] References to 'Wesley' in future paragraphs refer to the Rev John Wesley.

2.1 The religious and political nature of British society

The historical context in which the Methodist movement[21] was established played a significant part in its formation and development. The ingredients which were to be placed into the Methodist pot were prepared during a time of political and religious upheaval in both England and Europe. English society had been through a politically turbulent time under a succession of monarchs that not only affected the political life of the nation but also their religious affiliations. Under Elizabeth I, the Act of Supremacy (1559) was promulgated ensuring that the reigning monarch served as the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. The Act of Uniformity (1559) formalised the doctrine and liturgy of the church as set down in the Book of Common Prayer, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion and the Book of Homilies. These measures became the foundation for the future political and religious framework of the nation and the church. In addition, Puritan and Reformist influences from the Continent were impacting English society and the Church of England.

In an attempt to manage the diversity in beliefs and theology of the various religious formations of English religious society, the Act of Toleration was passed in 1689. This required either conformity to the doctrines of the Church of England or to be treated as nonconformists with stringent restrictions. An implication of this Act for the future Methodist movement is clearly set out by Heitzenrater (1995) who states: "The alternatives that faced many were clear – subscription to the Articles or registration under the Act. It is no wonder that Wesley, on these grounds, vehemently opposed those in his movement who favoured separation from the Church of England – ironically, the 'toleration' allowed to dissenters by their registering under the Act of Toleration also seriously circumscribed their political and religious freedom" (Heitzenrater 1995:18). A further implication was that, with the revival of the Methodist movement and being aware of the consequences for his nonconformist paternal grandfather, Wesley was adamant that the movement would remain faithful to and function within the Established Church. Consequently, Wesley and the Methodist movement made every effort not to cause a rift with the Church of England. These measures included using consecrated buildings for the gatherings of the Methodist societies and meetings of Wesley with his preachers and allowing members to attend worship in their local churches in order to receive the sacraments.

[21] References in this study to the 'Methodist movement' and 'Methodists' are to those members, preachers, societies and circuits committed to the oversight of John Wesley and the Methodist Conference which slowly developed into a separate identifiable entity, a development which speeded up closer to and after the death of Wesley.

In addition, the Pietist influence on the formation of religious societies had become part of English religious life, including within the Church of England. The value of the religious societies was not lost on Wesley as a tool for the promotion of holiness of heart and life, remembering that "Wesley did not set out to found a church, but rather a religious society (or movement) to serve a specialist purpose the propagation and preservation of the Methodist ethos" (Attwell 1989:111). The emphases and methodology of the religious societies would play a significant role in the future formation of Methodist preachers and presbyters under the control of Wesley and the Methodist movement.

It is to be noted that the influences of the prevailing social, political and religious milieu of English society and the Established Church were constraining elements in the formation of the doctrines and practices of the Methodist movement.

2.2 Influences of John Wesley

The ecclesiology of the Methodist movement was strongly influenced by the ecclesiology, emphases, beliefs and actions of the Rev John Wesley. Three influences pertinent to this research will be considered.

2.2.1 Influences of Wesley's ecclesiology

The influence of Wesley's ecclesiology on the developing movement is firmly rooted in his upbringing within and his commitment to the Church of England. As the son of a clergyman of the Church of England, John and his brother Charles were raised with a loyalty to the heritage, doctrines and usages of the Church of England, as set down in the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Book of Common Prayer and the Book of Homilies. In September 1725 the Bishop of Oxford, Dr Potter, ordained John Wesley as a deacon and then officiated at his ordination as a presbyter on September 22, 1728, following the protocols and rites of the Established Church and Wesley's commitment to the doctrines and usages approved by the Church of England (Tripp 2003:192-195).

Wesley, however, was disillusioned with the political and religious powers of his day, considering them "to be largely in a fallen state" (Snyder 1978:40). His desire was to operate a religious society within the Church of England infusing new life into the church whilst functioning in terms of her doctrines and usages. His intention is evident from the first

Conference of the movement of those invited by Wesley in 1744 to "…'confer' with him about the doctrine, discipline, and practice of the Methodist societies" (Rack 2011:113).[22] Rack (2011) documents the ten questions and answers of that Conference recorded as the *Minutes of Conference*, 1744 §§45-56 (Rack 2011:783-785). The answer to each question records a faithfulness to the Church of England, a commitment to the Articles of Religion and to defend the doctrines of the Church: "Both by our preaching and living" (Rack 2011:784). The question, "Do we separate from the Church?" is answered: "We conceive not: we hold communion therewith, for conscience sake, by constantly attending both the Word preached and the Sacraments administered therein" (2011:784). Attwell (1989) expresses this allegiance of Wesley to the Established Church as follows: "The very idea of separation from the Church of England was repugnant to them [John and Charles Wesley]… they lived, laboured and died as loyal and devoted priests in Anglican orders…. Wesley insisted that he deviated in no way from the Articles, Homilies and Liturgy of the Church of England…" (Attwell 1989:108).

Wesley's commitment to the Church of England and its doctrines were, again, upheld by the Wesleyan Conference of 1755 following an extensive discussion on the presentation by Wesley of his treatise "Ought We to Separate from the Church of England?" (Heitzenrater 1995:216; Rack 2011:271).

Important elements in Wesley's ecclesiology included his belief, in keeping with Article XIX of the Articles of Religion, that "the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's Ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same" (Wesley 1788:317). Consequently, the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments are essential elements of Wesley's ecclesiology of the visible Church. This fact is confirmed by Stallings (2013:69-85) stating: "At its very constitution, the Wesleyan theology of the Church was ultimately rested upon two mighty pillars set absolutely and uncompromisingly in (Anglican) stone. It was from these two inseparable and

[22] References to the Minutes of Conference in England are taken from Rack, H.D. (ed.), 2011. *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 10. The Methodist Societies: The Minutes of Conference*. Annotated edition March 1, 2011. Nashville: Abingdon Press. This work was commissioned by the Wesley Works Editorial Project whose aim was to "produce a critical and annotated text of the whole of the surviving *Minutes*, manuscript and printed, along with such evidence as could be found in the proceedings of Conference during the 'lost years' [post 1862] and of early meetings with the Calvinistic Methodists" (Rack 2011:xv). The process adopted by the editors is described on pages 113-119 of the volume.

immovable cornerstones the Word and the Sacrament that sprung forth every extension and missional adaptation of Wesley's ecclesiological divinity" (Stallings 2013:69).

Wesley believed that "ordination was necessary for administering Sacraments a mere call to preach was insufficient" (Rack 2011:96). Consequently, he insisted that only suitably authorised persons were permitted to administer the sacraments, particularly Holy Communion. Wesley was reticent to ordain his Helpers and Assistants[23] even when the leaders and members of societies complained that they were not able to receive the sacrament. His understanding was that there are "two orders distinct from each other, the one having power only to preach and (sometimes) baptise, the other to ordain also and administer the Lord's Supper" (Baker 1970:333).[24]

Wesley was unrelenting that lay persons, even those whom he appointed as full-time Assistants and Helpers within the movement, were not permitted to administer the sacraments. In his sermon on Prophets and Priests in 1789, Wesley elucidated the role of lay preachers stating: "Did we ever appoint you to administer sacraments, to exercise the priestly office? Such a design never entered into our mind; it was the farthest from our thoughts: And if any preacher had taken such a step we should have looked upon it as a palpable breach of this rule, and consequently as a recantation of our connexion"[25] (Outler 1987:79).

As a consequence of the forces of circumstances, when it became impossible for the small band of ordained clergy to meet the needs of the growing number of societies and circuits cared for by the Helpers and Assistants, Wesley had to make a bold and dramatic decision. In 1785 he ordained presbyters for the work in Scotland and then in 1788 for the work in England.

Wesley's ecclesiology differed from that of the Established Church in ways which would impact the Methodist movement. He rejected the traditional beliefs of apostolic succession believing that true apostolic succession "consisted in having the apostolic spirit, a possibility and responsibility not only for every preacher, but even for every Christian" (Baker 1970:152). For the Methodist people, apostolic succession came to mean not an uninterrupted

[23] Wesley's Helpers and Assistants were lay persons who offered to assist Mr Wesley on a full-time basis and who were accountable to him and the Conference for their conduct and duties. They were travelling preachers within the circuit and were not permitted to administer the sacraments (Heitzenrater 1995:194-196).

[24] Baker (1970) includes the document of Wesley, 'Ought we to separate from the Church of England?' in his publication: Baker 1970:326-340.

[25] The term 'connexion' or 'Connexion' (with this spelling) is used in the Methodist Church to describe the denomination as a whole in a particular country or region, consisting of a number of districts/synods.

succession from the Apostles but the continuity of the apostolic witness in the Christian community (MCSA 2002:15).

While Wesley accepted an episcopal form of Church government as "both scriptural and apostolical: I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the Apostles" (Telford 1931a:182), he did not believe that it was prescribed for all time. His standpoint was that "neither Christ nor His Apostles prescribed any particular form of Church government" (1931a:182). In keeping with the Church of England, Wesley held that the three orders of bishops, priests and deacons are "plainly described in the New Testament… and believe they generally obtained in the churches of the apostolic age" (Rack 2011:202). However, he was not assured "that the same plan should obtain in all churches throughout all ages" (2011:202). It was his belief that valid ministries are acceptable by those who do not follow the threefold order and, therefore, no particular polity is wholly right or wholly wrong (Ward & Heitzenrater 1991:109-111).

Another important implication for the Methodist movement is that, following his reading of Lord Peter King in 1746, he was convinced that "bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order and that he as a presbyter had the right to ordain" (Rack 2011:96)[26] "together with other presbyters of the Church of England who had joined the Methodist movement" (Attwell 1989:195). Wesley, however, neither believed that ordination was a sacrament nor that it "confers an indelible character" (Baker 1970:152) on the ordained.

The implications of Wesley's ecclesiology on the Methodist movement are that he regarded certain tenets of the Church of England as being immutable while others were not regarded as being too sacrosanct for adaptation to the missional needs of the Methodist movement. These would be incorporated and developed into the doctrines and practices of the Methodist movement.

2.2.2 Influences of Wesley's polity

In speaking of the influences of Wesley's polity, it is important to remember that Wesley's polity, and therefore that of the Methodist movement, was constantly changing as the movement evolved from a predominantly lay revival movement within the Church of England to become an independent denomination. Wesley was constantly adapting the formulation of policies relating to the acceptance, advancement and discipline of preachers

[26] See also Rack 2011:587.

by the Wesleyan Conference as well as the ordination of presbyters. It is helpful to record the emphases of Stallings (2013:69-85) that Wesley's ecclesiology is neither neatly packaged nor fixed. It was always directed at the effective implementation of the *missio Dei* in keeping with the traditions and practices of the primitive and apostolic Church whilst at the same time emphasising that "the Church is profoundly missionary and pneumatic in nature (cf. Acts 1-2)" (Stallings 2013:69). The development in his evolving polity and practices arose from his seeing "the essence of the church and its ministry as [being] functional rather than institutional" (Baker 1970:149).

There were a number of influences that impacted Wesley's evolving polity and ecclesiology, four of which will now be mentioned. The first was the influence of Wesley's broad reading diet of authors representing Calvinist, Catholic, Lutheran and Moravian beliefs, medieval mysticism, Pietism and Puritan thinking (Heitzenrater 1995: 39, 49, 7980, 169, 172). He was prepared to accept and adopt new models of thinking as he extracted insights from the authors. An example is his understanding of ordination and church governance in reading King's *Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church* (King 1691) and Stillingfleet's *The Irenicum: A Weapon Salve for the Church's Wounds* (Stillingfleet 1662). These works convinced him that "neither Christ nor His Apostles prescribed any particular form of Church government, and that the plea for the divine right of Episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive Church" (Telford 1931a:182; Snyder 1978:34-36).

The second influence is that Wesley was prepared to adopt and adapt the methods and practices of other religious groups to meet the emerging requirements and circumstances arising from the growth of the movement and the needs of people. Examples are the Moravian practice of separating their followers into 'bands' for spiritual nurture and from George Whitefield who encouraged him to turn to field preaching.

The third influence was the important role that conscience played in the thinking of Wesley. In keeping with Protestant belief, Wesley was adamant that every action, including that of the preachers submitting to the unanimous decisions of the Conference, was subject to the assent of personal conscience. His rationale, as stated in 1746, was that: "In speculative things each can only submit so far as his judgment shall be convinced: in every practical point so far as we can without wounding our several consciences" (Rack 2011:189). In a letter to Mr Walker on September 3, 1756, Rev Wesley writes: "'To follow my own conscience, without any

regard to consequences, or prudence, so called,' is a rule which I have closely followed for many years, and hope to follow to my life's end" (Tyerman 1973b:248). A similar sentiment is expressed in a letter to Mr Norton on the same day declaring: "I have no right over your conscience, nor you over mine; therefore, both you and I must follow our own conscience" (1973b:256).

The fourth influence was the formation of the Holy Club at Oxford in 1730 where the benefits of regular study, encouragement, mutual accountability, celebration of the sacrament and involvement in works of social action became the fore-runner of the formation of societies by Wesley for those who joined the movement. Consequently, as members became part of the movement, Wesley insisted that they were incorporated into societies, divided into classes and overseen by a lay Leader. His intention was that the classes would offer "mutual encouragement in the development of devotional piety based on a study of the Bible and other works of divinity, and to assist the promotion of personal holiness and morality" (Heitzenrater 1995:23).

Having recognised Wesley's theological formation within the Church of England and looked at some of the influences on Wesley's theology, it becomes possible to identify the developments in his ecclesiology and polity which followed his ordination into the Church of England in 1728. Wesley was insistent that all persons baptised into the Church of Christ are called to the ministry of servanthood and priesthood. Jesus Christ entrusts ministry and mission to every member of the body of Christ, both laity and clergy (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Ephesians 4:1-13). Consequently, Wesley accepted an expanded role for lay persons to become lay preachers**,** some of whom became his full-time 'Helpers' and 'Assistants', to whom he could "delegate the responsibility for oversight of members and leaders alike" (Davies & Rupp 1965:225-226).[27] The Methodist movement would not have had the impact and influence in the years to come without the ministry of the lay preachers and Class Leaders.

The methodology adopted by Wesley was that those who believed that God had called them to serve in full-time ministry, initially as lay preachers within the movement and then as ordained presbyters, were required to have that call tested, initially by Wesley himself and, thereafter, by the Conference. The Conference of 1746 formulated regulations for the testing

[27] See also Tyerman 1973a:369-371, 459-461.

of those who believed that they were called by God to be full-time preachers in the Methodist movement.

Bowmer (1975) indicates that God's calling "was regarded as an indispensable necessity for the Christian minister…. All candidates for the Methodist ministry must initially have felt and responded to the call of God to the work, for it is this call alone that can give meaning or efficacy to any outward act of commissioning" (Bowmer 1975:209). Oden (2012) concurs stating that "The pastor must first be called by God through a spiritual discipline of self-discernment. Then that self-discernment must be confirmed by the believing church" (Oden 2012:49).

However, Wesley was insistent that the Helpers and Assistants, as lay preachers, were not permitted to preside at the sacraments as these were the prerogative of presbyters who had been authorised to do so following their ordination. The belief of Wesley and the Wesleyans was that "the sacraments are the sacraments of Christ in His Church, so that a man [sic] ought not to take it upon himself to administer them but ought to do so only when authorized thereto by the appropriate officer or court of the Church" (George 1978:159).

The Holy Club experience informed Wesley's initiative to develop structures and accountability for his preachers, both lay and ordained, who were to be 'in connexion' with him, accountable to him, appointed to their preaching places by him, subject to his discipline and committed to sound theological training in order to combat false doctrines and teachings. With the introduction of conferencing and the Conference, preachers were bound by their commitment to the Rules of a Helper, introduced in 1744, and their preaching had to be consistent with Wesley's *Sermons* and *Notes* (Davies & Rupp 1965:230-2, 34; Telford 1947:211-231). After serving a period on trial,[28] preachers were tested and brought into Full Connexion with the Conference which regulated all their affairs, appointments, doctrine and dealt with disciplinary matters (Bowmer 1975: 190-197). As a measure to ensure doctrinal and disciplinary conformity, a copy of the Large Minutes[29] was handed to preachers on their successful acceptance by the Conference.

The concept of entering into Full Connexion with the Conference is one deeply embedded in the Methodist tradition, beginning with Wesley who regarded the preachers and ordained ministers as being in a unique relationship, in connexion, with him. From 1744, preachers

[28] Preachers on trial were afforded an opportunity to affirm their calling, undergo a time of formation and testing and be prepared to be set aside to the full-time ministry.

[29] The Large Minutes are a consolidation of earlier Doctrinal *Minutes* and the Disciplinary *Minutes* that were "a distillation of Conference pronouncements on discipline and practice" (Rack 2011:105).

were accepted into Full Connexion with the Conference (Baker 1965:230–234), whereby the Conference was committed to the spiritual and material care of preachers while the preachers and presbyters pledged their commitment by preaching and teaching its doctrine and submitting to its discipline (Rack 2011:32; 48–56). Walsh (1965:275-315) emphasises that: "The mark of acceptance into the Methodist itinerancy was the reception of preachers into 'full connexion' by Conference" (Walsh 1965:281). His view is supported by Bailie (2009) that "Methodist ministers are never members of a congregation or 'Society'. Ministers in 'Full Connexion' hold their membership with the Conference – that is their congregation" (Bailie 2009:92).

Two landmark decisions would impact the acceptance into Full Connexion and the future ordination of presbyters arising from Wesley's insistence on his powers over preachers and of the powers and authority of the Conference once he passed away. The first was the Conference of 1763 adopting the Model Deed with the provisions that all appointments would be controlled by Wesley and, upon his death, by the Conference. The second was the Deed of Declaration of 1784 legislating the powers and authority of the Conference (Heitzenrater 1995: 314-317; Rack 2011:84-88). Wesley and the Methodist movement were clear that only those who were authorised, at first by Wesley himself and thereafter by the Conference, could be ordained after being examined and received into Full Connexion with the Conference (Rack 2011:236).

Wesley also introduced measures for consolidating the societies into a connection of societies under his control, a practice that developed into the formation of the annual Conference with the adoption of the concept of conferencing. The Conference became the organisational and regulatory structure underpinning the movement and all matters relating to the preachers. From the first Conference that met in 1744, the business of Conference was conducted in the format of questions and answers, both of which were recorded in the annual *Minutes*. Lawson (1965) describes the impact of connexionalism and the role of Conference stating, "Wesley's organizational genius had welded it [the Methodist movement] into a closely-articulated Connexion, which in many ways admirably displayed the traditional Catholic ideal of strong and responsible authoritative Church government, effectively exercised over the whole constituency of the faithful, and uniting them into one body" (Lawson 1965:198).

The historical records reflect that Wesley extended a major influence over the evolving ecclesiology and polity within the Methodist movement. The polity of the movement is very different from the gathering and procedures of the Holy Club at Oxford to the mid-eighteenth

century where the Methodist movement had all the rubrics in place to act as a separate religious organisation, except for the ordination of presbyters and the adequate administration of the sacraments. The concepts of full-time lay Helpers and Assistants and the associated polity of their being on trial; examined before being accepted into Full Connexion with the Conference; accountable to the Conference for their doctrine and discipline; subject to personal conscience; and appointed as itinerant preachers are all elements incorporated into the ecclesiology and polity of the Methodist movement. George (1978) comments that: "[t]he preachers were organised into a definite body. The annual Conference, with only a very small nucleus of clergymen, the circuits, the division into itinerant and local preachers, the use of some as Assistants and others as Helpers, the status of 'full connexion' after a period 'on Trial'; all this meant that men who were technically laymen were being organised into a kind of supplementary ministry" (George 1978:144).

In addition, Wesley was adamant that these preachers were not authorised to administer the sacraments – "for the sake of decency and order, if not for validity and effectiveness, the Lord's Supper must be administered by an ordained clergyman" (Baker 1970:158). The mounting problem was that the Church of England, and Wesley himself, refused to ordain presbyters for the work of the movement lest that cause a rift with the Church of England. This problem would escalate with the expanding Methodist work in America, England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales as Wesley insisted that "the Word had to be proclaimed in every place and the people required access to the Sacraments in every place" (Stallings 2013:70).

2.2.3 The decision by Wesley to ordain preachers

A significant development in the ecclesiology of the movement was Wesley's decision to ordain presbyters for the work in America following the Treaty of Paris (1783) which ended the American War of Independence. Consequently, the Church of England withdrew their clergy and Bishop Lowth, the Bishop of London refused the request by Wesley for the Church of England to ordain Methodist presbyters for the spiritual care and administration of the sacraments of the Methodist members in America.

Necessity to care for the members in America and his understanding of Biblical authority forced Wesley to make an ecclesiological decision, the seeds of which were planted in 1746 in his reading of Lord King's *Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church* (1691) together with his reading of Stillingfleet's *Irenicum: A*

Weapon Salve for the Church's Wounds (1662). Wesley was now convinced that the biblical terms of bishop and presbyter were synonymous, that he was "as real a Christian bishop as the Archbishop of Canterbury" (Telford 1931b:262) and as "a Scriptural *episkopos* [overseer]" (Telford 1947:297) was entitled to ordain his preachers. Writing to his brother Charles in August 1785, Wesley states, "I firmly believe I am a scriptural ἐπίσκοπος [overseer], as much as any man in England or in Europe; for the *uninterrupted succession* I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove" (Telford 1931b:284; Ward & Heitzenrater 1992:307).

It was in the "light of this reasoning and, as a pragmatic matter of extraordinary necessity" (Stallings 2013:79) that Wesley acted in 1784 and conducted his first ordinations of the Methodist movement, specifically for the work in North America. Wesel records this event of 1 September 1784 as follows: "Being now clear in my own mind, I took a step which I had long weighed in my mind, and appointed Mr Whatcoat and Mr Vasey to go and serve the desolate sheep in America" (Wesley 1829:815). Significantly, Wesley justified his actions in a letter to Dr Coke, Mr Asbury, and our Brethren in North America, dated 10 September 1784, (Wesley 1835) emphasising that his actions in no way violated the 'established order' of the Church of England and affirming his lifelong obedience to authority stating:

> [T]he case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops who have legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, neither any parish ministers. So that for some hundred miles together there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here therefore my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order and invade no man's right by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest (Wesley 1835:311).

Wesley's ordination of the American preachers was, therefore, in keeping with this tradition and his obedience to authority. The situation in America allowed him the liberty to ordain without abrogating any laws. Eversole (1963:11-21) explains that "Wesley's concern for the 'lost sheep in North America', coupled with what he interpreted as freedom to act, now caused him to accede to the continued demands of his followers in America for ordained ministers from among the Methodist preachers" (Eversole 1963:13).

Important elements in Wesley's practice of ordination are revealed in the manner in which Coke was ordained as the Superintendent of the work in America. Vickers (1969) describes how "Wesley, by the imposition of hands and by prayer, 'set apart' Thomas Coke as

superintendent…" (Vickers 1969:68).[30] Wesley was following the practice of ordination as deacon, priest and bishop in the Church of England with Rev Coke having been ordained as a priest in the Established Church. In Wesley's eyes, the ordination of Rev Coke as the Superintendent minister authorised and entitled him to ordain presbyters in America.

In addition, Wesley revised the ordination services for Bishops, Priests and Deacons from *The Book of Common Prayer* of 1662 to become the *Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America; with other Occasional Services*, commonly called the *Sunday Service* of 1784. The prepared liturgies included that of "The Form and Manner of Making and Ordaining Superintendents, Elders and Deacons" (George 1978:146). Simon (1914:145-154) clarifies that Wesley was intentional in ensuring that their ordinations were consistent with ordination in the Church of England, stating that Wesley "was determined not only to give some of his preachers authority to administer the sacraments but to give them that authority formally by the laying on of hands" (Simon 1914:147).

The Methodist precedent for ordination had been set, a situation arising from the ecclesiastical necessity for the effective mission of the Methodist work in America but following the customs of the Church of England. These ordinations included the imposition of hands and prayer to the Holy Spirit. Inevitably the step of ordination of presbyters by Wesley and his assistant priests of the Church of England contributed to the widening rift between the Methodist Movement and the Established Church. Unfortunately, tensions also arose between Wesley and his brother Charles who was convinced that "ordination is separation" (Heitzenrater 1995:216).

2.2.4 Subsequent ordinations by Wesley and the Conference in England

Further developments in the evolving ecclesiology and practice of ordaining preachers followed with ordinations for the work in Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland. These ordinations were, initially at the instigation of Wesley and conducted in private between three and four in the mornings, but were thereafter authorised by the Conference following the death of Wesley. In spite of strong opposition from within the Church of England and the Methodist movement, including his brother Charles, in 1785 Wesley ordained by the imposition of hands "three preachers for the work in Scotland… saying that Scotland was not

[30] To 'set apart' is the terminology in the Methodist denomination whereby the Conference separates persons within the priesthood of all believers to specific roles of ministry, for example, to ordination or as a bishop

under the Church of England" (Heitzenrater 1995:327).[31] Wesley did, however, insist that those ordained for the work in Scotland were not permitted to "use their powers conferred by that ordination while they were in England (either before or after being in Scotland, a somewhat awkward expectation on Wesley's part)" (1995:327).

In 1788 Wesley took the bold and significant step of ordaining three men specifically for the work in England, one of whom was Alexander Mather "allegedly as a superintendent (a quasi-bishop) as well" (Rack 2011:98), leading some within the Conference to "believe that Wesley's future plans included an 'episcopal' system of rule in England and a continuation of ordination there, presumably through Mather" (2011:98). It is also the understanding of George (1978:143-160) that "Wesley possibly intended to make arrangements in this way for the continuance of ordinations for England" (George 1978:152).

Wesley and the Wesleyan Methodist movement were now at odds with the Church of England and were well down the road to becoming an independent community in the Church of Christ. Separation from the Established Church was inevitable.

Following the death of Wesley in March 1791, legislative authority and guardianship of doctrine, discipline and the authorisation of ordination were transferred to the Conference which provided a collective oversight. Ordination now taxed the mind of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference with conflicting decisions being taken. Ordinations without the consent of the Conference were taking place. Consequently, the Conference of 1792 prohibited ordinations without their consent, the consequence of which was to suspend ordination except for the work overseas. The Conference of 1793 then decided that "the distinction between ordained and unordained preachers should be dropped…. The mark of acceptance into the Methodist itinerancy was the reception of preachers 'into full connexion' by Conference, a virtual ordination" (Walsh 1965:281).[32] It was only in 1836 that ordination by the laying on of hands was reinstated (Vickers 1969:200) together with the requirement that only those persons suitably authorised by the Conference were permitted to administer the sacraments and to act on its behalf. The ordinations of presbyters were now conducted at the time of the meeting of the Conference.

George (1978) explains the processes relating to ordination accepted by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference as being: "first a preacher was received into full connexion; then, normally only a few hours later, he was ordained by the imposition of hands…. Those whom

[31] See also George 1978:152 and Simon 1914:150.
[32] See also Heitzenrater 1995:348-349.

the Church believed to be called of God became both Travelling Preachers in the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion and Ministers of the Word and Sacraments in the Church of God" (George 1978:154-155). Put differently, Methodist presbyters were responding to what they believed to be the call of God, which was tested by the Conference and, at their ordination, were invested with authority to act on behalf of the Church of God whilst being accountable to the Conference (Bowmer 1975:207-220). An important element in being accountable to the Conference is the intention that presbyters are ordained to the itinerant ministry and are required to accept that they will be stationed by the Conference.

As a result of the influences of Wesley's ecclesiology, polity, ordinations and the function of the Conference, a number of elements and practices became entrenched and foundational to Wesleyan ordinations. One such usage, initiated by Wesley, was that, following their examination and acceptance by the Conference, the Helpers were given a copy of the *Minutes*[33] with the inscription "So long as you freely consent and earnestly endeavour to walk according to the following rules, we shall rejoice to go on with you hand in hand" (Rack 2011:236). This action determined that preachers were accountable to the Conference for their continuing authorisation to minister as part of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

At the time of the admission of Joseph Cownley as a preacher in 1747, Telford (1931a) describes the practice of receiving a Bible on being authorised to function within the Methodist movement: "He [Cownley] knelt down; and Wesley, putting a New Testament into his hands, said, 'Take thou authority to preach the gospel'" (Telford 1931a:135). It was also Wesley's practice to issue those ordained with a Certificate of Ordination (Tripp 2003:195).[34]

The Wesleyan doctrine of ordination required that those who perform the act of ordination by the imposition of their hands and the prayer of invocation to the Holy Spirit must themselves be ordained presbyters, either from other denominations such as the Church of England or those ordained within the Methodist movement. The understanding of Wesley and the Methodist movement was that "Methodism could ordain its own ministers because it possessed men with authority to do it men who had been themselves ordained by others in the ministry before them" (Bowmer 1974:127).

Methodist ecclesiology maintains that being ordained on the authorisation of the Conference and being received into Full Connexion with the Conference and with other presbyters in the

[33] The *Minutes*, first issued by Wesley in 1749, "comprised doctrinal and disciplinary matters from early Conferences". This edition was revised by Wesley in 1753. A further revised and updated edition in 1763 became known as the "Large Minutes" (Heitzenrater 1995:237).
[34] See also George 1978:152-154 and Vickers 1988:200-201.

Order of Presbyters sets the presbyter apart to the ministry of Word and Sacraments within the Methodist denomination. The separation of the ministries as a preacher and as a presbyter was important to Wesley who "always distinguished between the act of 'setting apart' to the work of preaching the Gospel and 'setting apart' not only to that work but also to the work of administering the sacraments" (Simon 1914:145). Wellings (2005:57-74), drawing from documents tracing the history of presbyteral ministry in the British Methodist tradition, presents the unique features of the ministry of those ordained, features that are also applicable to the MCSA, stating:

> Within the ministry of the people of God, the ordained focus, express and represent the ministry of the whole. Presbyteral ministry encompasses word, sacrament and pastoral responsibility, exercised in the spirit of the servant ministry of Christ. Although many aspects of this ministry are shared with lay people and deacons, in combination the features are exclusive to and definitive of the presbyterate (Wellings 2005:74).

However, only male persons were ordained with a few women being accepted as local preachers. The instruction of the Conference to all circuits was to "Let no person that is not in connexion with us preach in any of our chapels or preaching-houses without a note from Mr Wesley, or from the Assistant of the circuit from whence he comes; which note must be renewed yearly" (Rack 2011:639). Rack (2011) records that "women who were 'preaching' within Methodism were not invited to Conference because they were not formally set apart or recognised as itinerant (or even local) preachers, though some certainly attended the 'open sessions'" (Rack 2011:27).

In conclusion, I note that the rubrics of the ecclesiology and ordination in the Methodist Church were influenced by the religious and political nature of English society, the Church of England, John Wesley and the subsequent Conferences in the eighteenth century, leading to the establishment of the Methodist movement within the universal Church of Christ. Specific emphases of the Methodist movement that have been established include the authorisation of the ordinations by the Conference, that ordination is by the laying on of hands and the prayer to the Holy Spirit which sets the presbyter apart to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Associated with ordination are entering into Full Connexion with the Conference and accountability to the Conference as the final authority relating to the appointment of preachers to a circuit as well as over matters of doctrine, discipline and the mission of the church. The concepts of functioning as a Connexion and the role of the itinerant appointment of preachers were set down for future generations. The manner of conducting the business of Conference by means of regularised questions and recorded answers was established.

The historical analysis of the processes in England shows that it is permissible within the Methodist tradition for the theology, polity and practices of ordination to evolve and adapt to meet the needs of situations and people, an important matter for this study. The relevance of this observation is that when the English missionaries arrived in southern Africa, their ministry would not be conducted within a political, religious or cultural vacuum and could, therefore, adapt to the circumstances and needs of the African continent. A historical analysis will now follow relating to the establishment of the Methodist Church in southern Africa.

2.3 Ordination in the southern African context

Methodism was established in southern Africa through the efforts of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) according to the doctrines, practices and precepts of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in England.[3536] As happened in England, the establishment of Methodist work in southern Africa took place amidst pain, segregation and opposition from many quarters. While the colonial doctrine of ordination was suitable and appropriate to serve the Methodist people in England, the challenges facing the southern African work and Connexion were how to deal with a colonial church being planted in a missionary context and developing into an organisation with regulations, procedures and accountability.

The insight provided by Oladipo (2006) is helpful in drawing our attention to the European dilemma that "[t]he term 'Church' in the consciousness of early European missionaries was different from the Church in South Africa. The 'Church' was always in Europe, but the Church in Africa was regarded as a 'mission work' not to be confused with the 'Church' in Europe" (Oladipo 2006:95). This dichotomy had implications for the work in southern Africa as the missionaries were presbyters who saw themselves as missionaries in Africa who were accountable to the 'Church', that is the Wesleyan Methodist Church, in England. An

[35] As the emphasis of this research is on the Wesleyan Branch of the Methodist Church, a detailed discussion of the work and ministry of the Primitive Methodists on the African continent is not entered into. A brief overview is that, from 1870, Primitive Methodist Missions were opened in West and Southern Africa with the work being supported by the Africa Fund of the Primitive Methodist Missionary Fund (PMMS) and to whom the missionaries reported (Primitive Methodist Missionary Society 2020).
A process that began in 1930, the Conferences of both the Primitive Methodist Connexion of Great Britain and the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa resulted in the decision to unite the work of the branches of Methodism operating in South Africa and transfer such operations under the auspices of the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa. This union took place in 1932 with the name of the united denomination becoming the Methodist Church of South Africa (MCSA 1946:8-9).

[36] The doctrine and practices of ordination in southern Africa were influenced by the Methodist Church of Great Britain. For this reason, the influences of the Unite Methodist Church of America are not considered. While the United Methodist Church does have branches in southern Africa, the MCSA does not find its roots in that denomination.

overview of the history of ordination in the southern African context up to the formation of the South African Conference in 1882 and then from 1883 to the present follows.

2.3.1 The practice of ordination in southern Africa pre-1883

The historical record of the establishment of Methodism on southern African soil is well documented by Eveleigh (1923), Cragg (2011) and Hewson (1950).[37] A brief overview indicates that the initial ministry of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in South Africa was by soldiers attached to the British regiments stationed in the Cape during both the first (1795) and the second (1806) British occupations. The efforts of Middlemiss and later a local preacher, Kendrick, are recorded together with the opposition to these Wesleyan Methodist preachers from the officers in the regiment as well as by the Governor of the Cape Colony. This was in terms of the religious policies adopted by the British from the Dutch in 1806. Consequently, Kendrick appealed to the WMMS in England to send a minister to South Africa as a matter of urgency.

The WMMS accepted this challenge to extend their influence in Africa and agreed to do so with specific instructions that the missionary presbyters must "pay a conscientious regard to our discipline… keep closely to the model exhibited by your Brethren at home… and to submit to the powers that be" (Vickers 1988:381-388). They were required "[n]ot to get involved in the politics of the country and to concentrate on forming an indigenous clergy" (Millard-Jackson 2008:32). Cragg (2011) suggests that the "Wesleyan missionaries were expected to transplant English Methodism in alien soil" (Cragg 2011:25).

The Rev McKenny arrived in 1814 to an intensified objection to the Methodist presence when he extended his ministry to the local inhabitants and the slave population, much to the chagrin of the Governor of the Cape and the Dutch church and ministers. When the Rev Barnabas Shaw arrived in 1816, he too was refused permission to establish a Wesleyan Mission in Cape Town and experienced resistance as "there was already an Anglican military chaplain in Cape Town… [and] the settlers brought their own *dominees*[38] with them; but these men were chaplains to the Dutch rather than missionaries to the Africans" (Pritchard 2013:45,50). It is significant that the establishment of the Methodist work in southern Africa

[37] Many authors record the establishment of the Methodist work in South Africa. Those consulted include Attwell (1989), Balia (1991), Cragg (2011), Cragg & Millard (2013), Eveleigh (1923), Hewson (1950), Ketshabile (2012), Kumalo (2009), Moloi (2008), Pritchard (2013) and Whiteside (1906).
[38] A *dominee* is a minister in the Reformed Churches in southern Africa.

faced similar experiences from both civil and religious authorities, as history has shown during Methodism's formative years in England.

The Methodist missionaries saw this as the ideal opportunity to concentrate their work among the indigenous people.[39] Whiteside (1906) reflects that "Mr Shaw's thoughts began to turn to the heathen, for whose evangelization he considered he had been chiefly sent out" (Whiteside 1906:38). The progression of the Methodist influence in southern Africa was from humble lay beginnings in the Cape at the turn of the 19th century to the endeavours of presbyteral missionaries from England, assisted by indigenous persons, who extended the work from the Cape into Namaqualand, up the east coast from Bathurst to KwaZulu Natal, into the interior of South Africa and into countries adjacent to our present national borders.

The missionaries were not able to function without the assistance of the local inhabitants with their *modus operandi* being to utilise the indigenous persons as interpreters whose role then evolved to that of an evangelist under the supervision of the missionary. After receiving an education and training from the missionaries, the indigenous evangelists were recognised as lay preachers. However, it was only in 1866 that the first four black preachers, John and James Lwana, William S Kama and Charles Pamla, were received on trial with their names appearing "in the *Minutes of Conference* as 'Native Assistant Missionaries'" (Clark 1923:22).[40] The progression of indigenous persons who felt called by God to the full-time ministry is described as "[i]nterpreter, catechist, schoolmaster, a local preacher, evangelist, minister – this seems to have been the natural process of development which has given us the Native Ministry" (Clark 1923: 23).

On the completion of their studies, Charles Pamla, William Shaw Kama and James Lwana were the first indigenous persons to be ordained as presbyters on 26 February 1871 (Denis 2007:62). Their ordination followed the practices adopted from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England of first being received as preachers into Full Connexion with the Conference and then ordained as presbyters with the laying on of hands and prayer to the Holy Spirit (Findlay & Holdsworth 1922:322-323).

The formation and training of the indigenous assistants was initially provided by the superintendent ministers of the circuits to which they were appointed, sometimes even living with the Wesleyan missionaries such as the Revs Allison, William Shaw and Lamplough

[39] I am using the word 'indigenous' to represent those persons born on southern African soil.
[40] The description 'Native' as used in the documentation of the period in South Africa was to differentiate such persons from the 'European' agents. Wherever possible, I will be using the word 'indigenous' in the place of 'Native'.

(Millard 1995:65-66). The training became more formalised with the establishment of formal training institutions such as the Native Theological Institution at Healdtown (1867 to 1880), Lesseyton (1883-1921), the South African Native College at Fort Hare University (1921) and Bollihope (Cape Town) (1931-1940) (Cragg 2013d:58-61).[41] However, the training of the indigenous preachers differed from that of white candidates for the ministry in that "sixty two of the one hundred and eight white ordinands between 1904 and 1930 had spent two or three years at Richmond or another English theological college" (Cragg 2013d:60) in England. The segregation of the academic training and formation of persons for the presbyteral ministry continued with little or no contact between black and white students during their formative years. My own experience during the three years of academic training at Rhodes University between 1967-1969 was that we only had contact twice with our black colleagues from the seminary although this was situated close by at the University of Fort Hare. The Conference of 1989 expressed their dismay that "the existence of segregated institutions for the training of our ministry compromises our unity and retards ideals of Justice and Reconciliation" (MCSA 1989:283).

A deep-seated reluctance by the WMC to ordain African preachers while their work was essential to their missionary endeavours was a great source of frustration to the indigenous preachers, helpers and the indigenous population (Balia 1991:38-43). A decisive event leading to an increase in the number of local persons to be ordained was the visit by the Rev John Kilner of the WMMS from England in 1879. Kilner became aware of the racism practised against the indigenous workers who were becoming increasingly dissatisfied at the manner in which they were treated. He also noted that they "were not allowed to perform marriages or serve the eucharist" (Millard 1995:61).[42] Kilner also drew attention to the unwillingness of the missionaries to ordain the indigenous ministers and, following their acceptance by the Native Quarterly Meetings, "authorized the ordination of over fifty evangelists whom they had failed to advance" (Pritchard 2013:157).[43]

Balia (1991) expresses the significance of Kilner's visit stating: "Several '*native agents*' were duly recognized for their faithful endeavours and given the previously-denied opportunity of candidating for the ordained ministry" (Balia 1991:46-47). The *Minutes of the Third General*

[41] See also Clark 1923:22-23, Kumalo & Richardson 2010:259-274, Richardson 2007:134-135, 139 and Whiteside 1906: 236-237, 285.
[42] It is important to be reminded that the reluctance of the colonial missionaries to ordain indigenous persons and/or to give them positions of leadership continued into the new dispensation, post 1883, the impact of which will be discussed in section 2.3.2 of this chapter.
[43] See also Hewson 1950:74-75.

Meeting of Chairmen and representatives of the Five South African Districts (1880) then referred to those accepted by the synods as "Native Minister" (WMC 1880:1) in the station to which they are appointed. Kilner also advocated the formation of a South African Methodist Conference, a proposal accepted by the 1882 Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England. That Conference resolved "to constitute a South African Conference which, in accordance with the Plan hereafter stated, shall have jurisdiction over all the Wesleyan-Methodist Ministers, Preachers on Trial, Churches, and Missions in South Africa… such Conference to meet annually, and to be affiliated to 'The Yearly Conference of the people called Methodist'" (WMC 1883:iv).

The recommendations by Kilner were indeed bold steps for the South African Conference as church polity in South Africa was initially controlled and influenced by the WMMS committee in England, being described by Beukes (2014) as follows: "The paternal relationship between the British Conference and the South African Methodist Districts meant that they ultimately held control over all decisions. They selected Missionaries, assigned them to their Circuits, constructed buildings and decided what new areas should be explored, simply because they funded the whole endeavour**"** (Beukes 2014:33). When this arrangement proved to be cumbersome, the Conference in England delegated powers to the Chairman of each district who presided over an autonomous District Meeting.[44] However, the District Meetings still needed the consent of the British Conference in ministerial matters and the stationing of ministers (Cragg 2011:174).

The steps initiated by Kilner for the ordination of the indigenous preachers were not generally welcomed by those serving as missionaries in South Africa. Findlay and Holdsworth (1922) record that "Even though the Missionaries had agreed to this, many felt that the action was too hasty, and there were serious misgivings on the part of some" (Findlay & Holdsworth 1922:323). Following the ordinations of 1871, there was a distinct unwillingness by the South African districts to ordain black presbyters in spite of their significant work and their leadership abilities. This was exacerbated by the lack of a homogenous policy of the districts regarding the ordination of indigenous persons. This reticence is borne out by the fact that when the first Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa met in 1883, there were only 17 African presbyters in the Connexion compared to the 73 European presbyters, remembering that in 1860 "of Native Ministers there were none" (WMC

[44] In keeping with the polity of the Methodist Church in England, a Chairman of the District presided over a District Meeting comprising delegates of each circuit within the district. The present terminology used by the MCSA is that of Bishop for Chairman of the District and synod to describe the District Meeting.

1883:50). However, Balia (1991) and Cragg (2013a) indicate that Kilner's visit and the subsequent developments "brought in great benefits for the cause of Methodism in South Africa" (Balia 1991:47). This included the formation of the South African Conference which first met in April 1883 comprising six districts and meeting in two sessions, Ministerial and Representative. The Transvaal District, however, remained under the British Conference (Cragg 2013a:11-14).

The pattern adopted by those becoming presbyters in the newly established WMC clearly followed the pattern inherited from England, beginning with an examination of the call to the ordained ministry, acceptance on trial, undergoing a period of theological training and formation, acceptance into Full Connexion and then ordination by the laying on of hands. These procedures were initially handled by Ministerial Sessions of the individual districts but evolved to a Ministerial Session of the Combined Districts and then to the Ministerial Session of the Conference (WMC 1883:vii). There was an exception, however, when the Rev Barnabas Shaw appointed Jacob Links as an Assistant Missionary in 1822 without his being ordained and received into Full Connexion (Cragg 2011:27).

Policies relating to the acceptance and ordination of presbyters in the South African Connexion were set down in the Plan and Constitution of the South African Conference adopted by the British Conference of 1882 (WMC 1883:iii-xiv). Portions relating to Ministers[45] relevant to this study are from paragraph X, describing the policy for "the exclusive jurisdiction of the Conference when consisting of Ministers only" to include "Ministerial lists; recommendations of admission, and continuance of Preachers on trial; arrangements for the examination of Candidates and Preachers on Trial; recommendations of admission into full connexion and for ordination…. All questions affecting ministerial character and ability, and all questions of discipline arising therefrom or in any wise relating thereto…. Stations, and all appointments of Ministers…" (WMC 1883:vii-viii).

The history of ordination from the inception of the Methodist work in southern Africa to the formation of the South African Conference clearly shows that the policies and procedures were indistinguishable from those of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England. A reluctance to ordain indigenous persons and their marginalisation within the Connexion also need to be recorded as marks of the colonial heritage.

[45] The definition of a Minister in the Plan and Constitution is: "The word 'Minister' throughout these Resolutions designates only Preachers who are admitted into full connexion either with the 'yearly Conference,' [in England] or with the South African Conference" (Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa 1883:iv).

2.3.2 Ordination in southern Africa post-1883

In the years following the independence of the South African Conference from 1882, ordination continued to follow the ecclesiology, polity and practices adopted at that Conference, modelled on those of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of England as set down in the Plan and Constitution of the South African Conference (WMC 1883:iii-xii). When the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination recorded in the *Minutes of the First Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa* (WMC 1883:26-27) are compared with the *Minutes of the Thirtieth Annual Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa* (WMC 1912: 53-54, 154-156), *Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of South Africa* (MethSA 1946:21-39) and the *Methodist Book of Order* (MCSA 2016a:11-21, 30-37), it is clear that the extensive inclusion of the colonial ecclesiology and doctrines have continued to the present. These similarities extend to the polity and processes from a person's call to the full-time ordained ministry, their acceptance into Full Connexion and ordination and that ordination is a function of those previously ordained by the laying on of hands and the prayer to the Holy Spirit. Ordination authorises those called by God to be set apart to the ministry of Word and Sacraments. The Conference in a Connexional church is the ultimate authority relating to the appointment of preachers to a circuit as well as over matters of doctrine, discipline and the mission of the church. I will, therefore, not be repeating how these elements are incorporated into the ecclesiology and doctrines of the MCSA. I will, however, continue with the history of ordination in the Southern African Conference, post-1883, and highlight practices which developed in an attempt to adapt the model to the southern African context. However, many of the adaptations that were made were often perceived and experienced as discriminatory.

What developed were some changes to the doctrine of ordination but predominantly procedural and organisational changes relating to candidating for the ministry, the formation of presbyters and their length of probation, locations for academic training and various attempts at post-ordination training. Some of those adaptations were initiated before becoming an independent Conference but are included in those descriptions in section 2.3.3 below.

In spite of the declaration by the President of the WMC in his address to the first Conference of the South African Connexion in 1883 that "The South African Connexion is one; its Ministers and members form a single communion…. Arrogance and prejudice on the one side, suspicion and distrust on the other, will have a damaging, nay deadly effect upon the

future of the Connexion" (WMC 1883:56). A significant feature in this period was an upsurge in discriminatory practices based on ethnicity. The reluctance to ordain African preachers continued and was exacerbated in the late 1880s with the decision to raise the educational qualifications of candidates for the ordained ministry. Unfortunately, some of the African evangelist candidates who had faithfully served the church over many years "proved unable to cope with the studies" (Pritchard 2013:156) and so were excluded from the presbyteral ministry (Balia 1991:47-48). The natural consequence was a hiatus in the incorporation of indigenous preachers into the presbyteral ministry thereby, ensuring that white persons remained in control of decisions by the Conference.

Frustration among the black clergy grew as a result of the colonial attitude of superiority; white control of black circuits; denying black circuits and their organisations control over their financial and disciplinary matters; restricting black presbyters from holding the positions of chairman or secretary of the District Meetings; a feeling that "there was a lack of complete confidence in their actions and abilities" (Balia 1991:38) and "a disposition to keep them back from leadership" (1991:39).[46] It is significant that most of the white ministers serving in South Africa came from Britain. Between 1883 and 1930, only 28 of 178 ordinands were born or grew up in South Africa. It was only in 1964 that the first black person, Rev Seth Mokitimi, served as the President of Conference.

The *Minutes* of 1883 confirm the racist practice of the Conference of placing black circuits under the superintendence of European superintendents even when such circuits were separated by long distances (WMC 1883:8-19).[47] Black presbyters also felt marginalised when the Chairman transferred them to a new circuit without appropriate consultation, whereas white presbyters were consulted extensively (Balia 1991:88). Together, these practices perpetuated European dominance in the structures and decision-making bodies of the church.

Competent black clergy persons began leaving the Methodist work, either forming their own church, as did Tile in 1884 when he formed the Thembu National Church, or joining the emerging Ethiopian Church movement, a milieu where they felt more comfortable in an African context (Cragg 2013b:29-33). Mangena Mokone resigned in 1892 to form the Ethiopian Church followed by James Mata Dwane in 1895 (Balia 1991:56, 69-72, 75-78).

[46] See also Cragg 2013b:28-32 and Millard-Jackson 2008:39.
[47] An example is Circuits 69, Clarkebury; 70, Cwecweni; 71, Idutywa Reserve; 72 Xora, Buwa and Engcobo that are "under the Superintendent of the Clarkebury Circuit" (WMC 1883:13).

This phenomenon of Ethiopianism is described by Hewson (1950) as "a racial Church, composed of and controlled by Africans" (Hewson 1950:91-96).[48]

The statement by Setiloane (1986) ascribing the source of Ethiopianism to "dissatisfaction deep down with the Western interpretation of Christianity – Western Theology" (Setiloane 1986:31) is significant for this study. This view is confirmed by de Gruchy & Chirongoma (2008:291-305) explaining that: "After 1886, as a whole, there was a fatal confusion between colonialism and Christianity in the minds of many Europeans and Africans" (de Gruchy & Chirongoma 2008:298). The premise of Mdingi (2015:39-40) that "Ethiopianism enabled Africans to discover God from their own perspective and from their culture" (Mdingi 2015:41) also needs to be noted for its significance for this study.

Numerous reasons for the resignations and the formation of the separatist work have been offered. Dwane's resignation in 1895 was precipitated by the WMC's insisting that the funds he had raised overseas for a college to educate indigenous preachers be handed over to the WMC (Balia 1991:75-76). He also believed that "an overwhelmingly white Conference was treating him differently on racial grounds" (Cragg 2013b:31). Balia (1991) highlights the fundamental grievance of Mokone being "the segregation of the African ministers in a separate district synod, while, at the same time, Whites were permitted to hold leadership positions on the African synod" (Balia 1991:72). Mokone was also concerned about the "lack of promotion for African ministers, lack of brotherliness of white ministers, unequal stipends and a desire to manage their own affairs" (Millard-Jackson 2008:39).[49] Hewson (1950) speaks of the indigenous presbyters being "impatient of European control,… an unmistakable nationalist spirit and a… revolt from discipline" (Hewson 1950:92-94). Madise (1999) also includes the objections by the missionaries to the participation of African preachers in cultural customs and events (Madise 1999:16).

It is also noteworthy that Lea (1926) recalls the words of Professor Jabavu, a lecturer at the South African Native College at Fort Hare, that "the formation of independent churches was often an attempt at self-expression and not necessarily an act of antagonism to the European churches" (Lea 1926:51). This statement by Jabavu supports Lea's premise that the growing desire of some Africans was to form an Ethiopian Church, "a black man's Church pure and simple, organised, supported and controlled without the aid, or the presence, or the sympathy

[48] See also Lea 1926:17-24.
[49] See also Balia 1991:69-72 for a fuller explanation of his complaints and reasons for resigning.

of the white man. It has come to stand for a quasi-religious and a quasi-political body. In its extreme form it stands for *Africa for Africans*" (Lea 1926:19).

Five significant developments took place as a result of the segregation of races. The first relates to the instruction in 1869 that the Grahamstown District was "to hold a separate District Meeting for African Ministers" (Cragg 2011:95), the first of which was convened in 1871, followed by the Queenstown District in 1874. The practice of holding separate European and African District Meetings within the South African Connexion was now established. Black and white clergy would not even meet together at the annual Synod. The Conference continued with the practice of separate African and European Ministerial Sessions of Synod until 1948 when the provision was introduced that "where both Sessions are united in so desiring, the European and African Ministerial Sessions of District Synods be allowed to meet together in Joint Ministerial Sessions" (MethSA 1948:44).

The second relates to the practice of holding separate ordination services *(WMC 1888:*62) based on race, at the time of the meeting of the annual Conference (Cragg 2013b:27-29). In addition to their separation at Ministerial Sessions, they now experienced separation at ordination. The ordinands did, however, meet together for their examination before the Conference and reception into Full Connexion by the Conference (MethSA 1946:39; Cragg 2013b:28). An example is the ordination services in 1888 when the ordination service for the "(English) brethren" was conducted in the "Alexandria Road Church, Kingwilliamstown" on 20 April 1888 and that for the "Native Ministers" in the "Native Church, Kingwilliamstown"[50] on April 22, 1888 (WMC 1888:62).

The third practice is reported from the Cape as early as 1851 whereby presbyters were stationed according to their ethnicity to racially separated church communities, often in close proximity to each other (Cragg 2011:37). Xozwa (1989) adds that "[a] White minister conducted various services in a Black township among the black congregations, but a black minister could not do so, irrespective of his educational qualifications" (Xozwa 1989:6).

A further implication was that most European presbyters were stationed in the urban areas while rural circuits were ministered to by the indigenous clergy. This usage was further entrenched by the Land Acts of 1913 and 1921 and the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950, paragraph 5.(1). These Acts categorised all South African citizens according to their ethnic classification, ensuring the physical separation of the different ethnic groups according

[50] The town became known as King William's Town.

to that classification. Consequently, discrimination between ordained ministers on ethnic grounds was now entrenched by regulating the presbyter's place of abode and stationing as well as segregating congregations along racial lines (Xozwa 1989:5-8).[51]

The fourth practice relates to differentiated stipend allowance scales for presbyters according to racial classification, a practice only eliminated in 1973 (MethSA 1973:103-104), together with a disparity in allowances, accommodation and schooling for the children of the clergy persons.

The fifth practice relates to candidature and formation of candidates for ordination. In an attempt to deal with the lack of academic proficiency of the indigenous preachers, academic requirements and regulations for candidating for the ministry differed according to the probationer's racial classification. The curriculum relating to their probationer examinations differed according to their ethnic classification (MethSA 1946:25-34). Academic training for the ministry was conducted at racially separated institutions, even on different continents. Initially, the majority of white probationers spent time training in England whereas only some black ministers were sent overseas, the majority training in South Africa (Cragg 2013c:59-60). Thereafter separate training colleges were utilised by the different racial groups, a practice that continued until 1999 (Richardson 2007:141).

An important element in the ordination of presbyters was their continued formation in separated institutions according to an ethnic classification which will be explored in some depth at this juncture. It was the closure of the Federal Theological Seminary in Pietermaritzburg in 1993[52] and its move to Kilnerton, Pretoria, to be known as John Wesley College, and the introduction of the 3-Phase formation programme for probationers that provided the significant impetus for an integrated model for theological formation. The closure of the theological faculty at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, at the end of 1999, marked the beginning of a new era in the life of the MCSA as now all probationers would receive their theological formation together at John Wesley College, Pretoria (Richardson 2007:140-151).

The 3-Phase formation programme was a major change in the formation of presbyters to minister in our African context. Probation was now set at five years, and not six, requiring two years of circuit work of which "at least one of these years every Probationer shall be

[51] See also Madise & Taunyane 2012:6-10.
[52]The Federal Theological Seminary (Fedsem) opened opposite the University of Fort Hare in Alice in the eastern Cape in 1963 and then moved to Pietermaritzburg in 1976.

stationed in a Circuit which affords the opportunity to minister in a cross-cultural situation" (MCSA 1993:16). The purpose of Phase 1 was "to enhance spiritual formation, provide practical skills for ministry particularly in the Methodist context, and overcome possible disadvantages in formal education" (1993:16). Phase 2 included ministerial training "with greater emphasis on formal theological training, either residential or through In-Service Training" (1993:17). Phase 3 was the ordination year with the intention that the ordinands:

1. reflect on their journey in their ministry and Christian life, and hence:
2. grow in awareness of their profile of skills, strengths and weaknesses, and
3. make decisions about areas of growth and further training in their ministry (MCSA 1995:19).

Significant developments in the decolonisation and Africanisation of ordination with the Phase 3 training programme were that training was multi-cultural and multi-racial from the time of candidature to ordination. Probationer ministers were now being exposed to multi-cultural contexts and prepared for ministry in a multi-cultural church.

One more adaptation in the formation of presbyters was that the Conference of 2005 resolved that the academic training and formation "be relocated to Pietermaritzburg as an autonomous member of the Cluster of Theological Institutions" (MCSA 2006:77), to become known as the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary. The colonial vestiges of separate and differing formations for ordination according to race were now something of the past. The cross-cultural and inter-denominational formation of presbyters was now deeply embedded in the ethos of the MCSA. From personal experience, the separated training and formation of presbyters was not conducive to creating a sense of collegiality, did not generate trust between individual presbyters and contributed to the negative impact of separation contained in the broader political agenda of the times. What stood out for me was that the processes denied colleagues the opportunity of dealing with diverse issues of the ministry in a multi-cultural context.

An important implication for the southern African context relates to the core understanding that ordination sets the presbyter apart to the ministry of Word and Sacraments. Only those "in full connexion, or duly authorised thereto, are permitted to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper" (MethSA 1946:19).[53] A situation faced by the South African Conference was an insufficient number of presbyters to meet the needs of all congregations to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion. As "a probationer minister is in effect a layman" (Cragg

[53] See also WMC 1912:155.

1963:3) and, technically, not entitled to administer the sacraments, the practice arose whereby the President of the Conference was entitled to issue a Certificate of Authority authorising probationer ministers to administer the sacraments where the pastoral need required such a decision (WMC 1912:155). The Certificate of Authority was "valid only from year to year, and within the Circuit for which it was issued" (MethSA 1946:36).

The colonial differentiation between the ministries of those ordained and not ordained together with the entitlement of only those ordained to administer the sacraments "or by a Probationer, duly authorised thereto" (MCSA 2016a:15) has been incorporated into Methodist polity and theology from the inception of the Methodist movement to the present.[54] The MCSA remains committed to the principle that "The Wesleyan tradition affirms that the celebration of the sacraments is an exclusive function of the office to which a Minister is duly authorised" (2016a:17). The commitment of the church is that when "we have insufficient Ministers to exercise a sacramental ministry, then we as a Church must act in accordance with our tradition in meeting this need; that is, we must ordain more people" (MCSA 2016a:17).

2.3.3 Adaptations within the Southern African Connexion

As has been described, the legacy of the colonial doctrine and practices of ordination left their indelible marks on the Methodist denomination in southern Africa. Many of the discriminatory practices were revoked and the capabilities of black presbyters were gradually acknowledged. With the introduction of geographic or non-racial circuits in 1976, more black presbyters were appointed as superintendent ministers of circuits, superintending both white and black presbyters as well as black and white congregations. The domination of white clergy and white superintendents was curtailed as black superintendents were granted the same status and responsibilities as white superintendent ministers. Discrimination in leadership roles on the grounds of race was now something of the past.

Other changes related to the impact of the colonial doctrine will now be described. A major shift occurred in 1976 when the first woman, Rev Constance Oosthuizen, was ordained as a presbyter after having served as a Deaconess for nearly 18 years.[55] The first black woman,

[54] See WMC 1912:155 and MethSA 1946:19.
[55] Deaconesses, now known as Deacons, are ordained by the imposition of hands and prayer to the ministry of Word and Service as distinct from presbyters who are ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacraments.

Rev Nikiwe Mavis Mbilini, who had also served as a Deaconess, was ordained in 1985 (Mkhwanazi & Kgatla 2015:186). The theology of ordination no longer discriminated against women on the grounds of their gender.[56] Serving as a presbyter was no longer the sole preserve of male persons.[57]

Changes were introduced relating to the colonial practice of holding separate Ministerial and Representative (lay) sessions of Synod and Conference. The Conference of 1990 referred to synods the proposal "that the separate ministerial and representative sessions be merged into one session in District Synods and in Conference" (MCSA 1990:356). The practice of separate Ministerial and Representative Sessions of Synod and Conference continued until 1995 when the Conference resolved that "Conference and the Synods will meet in one unitary session of laity and clergy" (MCSA 1995:310).

The acceptance of this proposal had implications for the presbyteral and diaconal ministries, resulting in all matters relating to their acceptance, training, advancement and ordination no longer being the preview of the Ministerial Sessions but the General Sessions of Synod and Conference. The theology of ordination now incorporated a greater contribution by the laity in the selection, formation and ordination of presbyters.

Some presbyters have mourned the loss of accountability of presbyters to their colleagues, a safe place for creative thinking regarding ministry and mission, and the loss of interaction with colleagues presently being experienced with the demise of the Ministerial Sessions of Synod. This change received a varied acceptance with some presbyters indicating that "we are poorer for its demise" (Scholtz 2012:163), asking to "[b]ring back the Ministerial Session" (Stephenson 2017) and Synods appealing for the "re-introduction of Ministerial Sessions of Synod" (MCSA 2003:157). The constant appeals for the revival of a Ministerial Session of Synod led the MCSA to introduce a Presbyters' Convocation in 2018, a development to be examined more fully in Chapter 3, section 3.2.

There have been adaptations regarding acceptance into Full Connexion with the Conference. The colonial doctrine of ordination required an ordinand to be in Full Connexion with the Conference prior to ordination. By 1990 that requirement was amended to read "Candidates

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Consequently, they are not permitted to officiate at the sacraments. Deacons are accountable to the Conference in a similar manner as presbyters.

[56] While the colonial heritage of discrimination against women has been eliminated, the ongoing debate relates to those clergy persons of the LGBTIQ community and will be discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.5.

[57] The matters of discrimination against women being ordained and serving in leadership will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3, section 3.3.1.

for ordination, before or after they have been received into Full Connexion, are ordained…" (MCSA 1991:31), a stipulation which is similarly recorded in the *Book of Order* (2016a:37). This amendment ensured that those persons who had been ordained in a different denomination and now wished to apply to enter the MCSA as ordained presbyters, could do so with certain provisions. The Conference of 1990 (MCSA 1990) declared that:

> The validity of the ordinations of other Christian churches may be recognised provided that:
>
> (i) the Church accepts the Holy Scriptures and the same historic creeds that we do accept;
>
> (ii) the intention was to ordain into the ministry of Word and Sacraments in the Church of Christ" (MCSA 1990:78).

The ordination of these persons would, therefore, be accepted by the Conference and they would not have to be re-ordained. However, they would be required to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference in order to be subject to the authority and discipline of the MCSA and their names recorded in the *Yearbook* (MCSA 2018a:191). The theology of ordination now allowed for presbyters to be ordained either before or after being received into Full Connexion with the Conference.

A further consequence of the openness of the MCSA to the recognition of ministry by other denominations is the provision in the *Laws and Discipline* of 1991 (MCSA 1991) that, "[w]ith the approval of the Presiding Bishop, ordained Ministers from other Christian denominations may be invited to assist" (MCSA 1991:31) in the laying on of hands at the ordination of a presbyter. This provision is not recorded in the *Laws and Discipline* of 1946 (MethSA 1946) but is recorded in the *Book of Order* (2016a:37). The theology of ordination accepted that the ordination of presbyters from other recognised denominations is equally valid.

A significant amendment to the processes relating to the question of the "worthiness" of an ordinand to be ordained was introduced in 2017. Previously, the ordinand was deemed worthy to be ordained following the question being put to the congregation at the ordination service: "Do you believe that they, by God's grace, are worthy to be ordained?" (MCSA 2014:11). It was the congregation at the ordination service which declared the ordinands worthy to be ordained. However, it is now the responsibility of the Synod and the Conference to make such a determination following the examinations of the ordinands before both bodies. As Morgan explains, "[i]t is those two bodies that determine the worthiness question" (Morgan 2018a).

Having been evaluated as worthy of being ordained, the Conference conducts a *Preparation for Reception into Full Connexion* (MCSA 2018c:1-3) ceremony, during which the Conference agrees to the reception of the ordinands into Full Connexion with the Conference. With the ordinands having been deemed worthy to be ordained, the Presiding Bishop will say to the Conference, "The EMMU Director has moved that we receive these people into Full Connexion and that they be Ordained at the next Ordination service" (MCSA 2018c:2). The Presiding Bishop then asks, "Does the Conference agree?" (2018c:2).

The amended procedures adopted in 2017 mean that what was previously a determination of the congregation at the ordination service as to the worthiness of prospective ordinands, now becomes a decision of Conference. At the ordination service, the Presiding Bishop declares that "By the grace of God we [the Conference] declare that they are worthy to be Ordained" (2018d:5). Following the congregation's response that they "will uphold them" (2018d:5) in their ministry, the ordinands are ordained and formally received into Full Connexion and, thereby, enter into a covenantal relationship with the Conference (2018d:8-9).

The role of Conference is twofold: to authorise the ordination of those deemed to be worthy of being ordained; and to authorise the "Presiding Bishop and the General Secretary, assisted by other Ministers" (2018d:37) to ordain the ordinands on behalf of the Conference. However, Methodist doctrine determines that it is neither the Presiding Bishop nor those laying on their hands who ordain. "Ordination is an act of the whole Church…. It is the presence of the Church and the whole of the liturgy which ordains" (MCSA 2002:12-13).

The question arises as to what the role of the laity is in these revised processes. The theology of ordination of the MCSA currently restricts the influence of the laity to those persons who are members of the Synod and the Conference, in keeping with the narrative of the MCSA that Conference is the ultimate authority relating to doctrine and policy, including the acceptance and ordination of presbyters. However, while ordination is authorised by the Conference and grants authority for the presbyter to function in that role within the priesthood of all believers, the laity affirms the decision of Conference and commits to support and uphold them in their ministry as a presbyter. In the words of the Rev Robertson to the ordinands at their witness service[58] at the Bloemfontein Conference in 1985,

[58] Ordinands are required to "make a Public Witness of their Conversion, Call to Ministry, and present Christian experience, prior to their acceptance into Full Connexion" (MCSA1991: 31) before the annual Conference. Previously this examination was conducted at the annual Conference but now takes place at the annual Synod (MCSA 2016a:36).

"ordination is a moment in which we hear 'God's Yes' and the 'people's Yes'" (Robertson 2019).

The holding of separate ordination services based on race and the location and timing of the ordination services have been adapted to meet the changing circumstances in the connexion. The practice of ethnically separated ordination services continued until the late 1960s. By 1968, when two ordination services were held in the same year, both were multi-racial. This marked the end of one of the vestiges of colonialism.

The Conference of 1965 proposed that "Ordination Services be conducted at District level" (MethSA 1965:205) but this proposal was not approved by the Conference. However, the Conference of 1990 accepted breaking with the tradition of ordaining presbyters at the annual Conference or at the Connexional Executive Meeting in those years when the Conference met tri-annually or bi-annually.[59] Between 1990 and 1995 regional ordination services were held (MCSA 1995:10) in terms of the resolution of the Conference of 1990 to "hold regional ordination services and to promote participation by our members [laity] in these services" (MCSA 1990:344). During this period, the services for the Reception of Ordinands into Full Connexion were conducted during the Conference sessions with the ordinations taking place regionally at venues across South Africa in the months following the Conference (MCSA 1994:8, 1995:10).

Further adaptations developed in order to accommodate the missional emphasis of the church with the Conference of 1996 approving, in principle, the introduction of "a new pattern of ministry, including some form of local ministry" (MCSA 1996:6). The intention was that "[n]ew patterns of ministry and service should be explored, including the use of Ministers who would have part-time secular employment, and the use of other voluntary workers recruited for outreach mission" (1996:6). Consequently, the Non-Itinerant category of presbyters, "Full-time Non-Itinerant and Part-time Non-Itinerant" (MCSA 2002:138), came into existence. However, the Conference of 2015 confirmed: "that the Non-Itinerant category of the ordained ministry be discontinued in its current form and no new candidates will be received" (MCSA 2016b:105). The doctrine of ordination has, therefore, returned to the founding principle of presbyters being ordained to the full-time itinerant ministry and being available for stationing by the Conference.

[59] The Connexional Executive replaced the annual Conference in 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006.

A significant amendment to the ecclesiology of the MCSA, and one which would impact the relationship entered into between a presbyter and the Conference, was the introduction of the stipulation that presbyters enter into "a covenantal relationship but not contractual relationship with the Church. The church provides ministers with the opportunity to practice [sic] their calling in or through this covenantal relationship" (MCSA 2016a:30). This regulation was first recorded in 2001 in the Application Form for those wishing to offer for ministry in the MCSA (Education for Ministry and Mission Unit: 2001). The covenantal relationship established between presbyters and the Conference continues when presbyters superannuate,[60] are on leave of absence, study leave or are seconded to an organisation outside of the denomination, and only ceases when a presbyter resigns or has been deemed to have resigned from the ministry (MCSA 2016a:42-46).[61] The covenantal relationship determines that there is no employment contract entered into between a presbyter and the MCSA while the presbyter serves under the direction of − and is accountable to − the Conference.

One matter that needs attention before some conclusions are drawn is the relationship of the laity to those ordained as presbyters. The role and ministry of the laity in the Methodist denomination is vital to the mission of the church. The impact of the Methodist movement in Great Britain would have been ineffective without the ministry of class leaders, local preachers, Helpers, Assistants and individual members of classes and societies. A similar pattern is evident in southern Africa where both lay individuals and lay organisations are indispensable to the Methodist witness. Kumalo records that David Magatha, Samuel Mathabathe and Robert Mashaba were responsible for the establishment of the Methodist work in Potchefstroom, Northern Transvaal[62] and Mozambique (Kumalo 2009:59). Black organisations and movements have equally been invaluable to Methodist outreach in southern Africa. One such movement is '*uNzondelelo*',[63] established in 1875, which not only raised funds for mission work but "also aimed at setting up mission work by black people for black people" (Kumalo 2009:60).

[60] Methodist presbyters are required to retire from the active ministry at 65 years of age.
[61] The concept 'deemed to have resigned' refers to the provision in the *Book of Order* (2016a) that "Should the Connexional Executive decide to leave a Minister without appointment to any Circuit or Connexional office for a two (2) year period, it may ask such Minister to resign from the Ministry of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. If the resignation is not made, the Minister shall be deemed to have resigned on the expiry of such a period" (MCSA 2016a:40). The MCSA discontinued this provision at the Conference of 2016.
[62] Today this area is known as the Limpopo Province.
[63] *uNzondelelo* is an isiZulu word translated as 'to desire earnestly' indicating "an ardent desire, an intense passion, an irresistible impulse to '*save souls*' combined with practical endeavour" (Balia 1991:36).

The Uniformed Organisations in the MCSA, including the Local Preachers Association, Women's Manyano, Young Women's Manyano and the Young Men's Guild, have all played a major role in the Methodist witness and ministry. In addition, the laity has always formed an important part of the decision-making processes at Conference, synod, circuit and society level relating to the presbyteral ministry. The laity is involved in the nomination of persons wishing to candidate for the ordained ministry, voting for their advancement in probation at the annual Synod, for their acceptance into Full Connexion with the Conference and for their ordination.

The theology of ordination determines that the ordained ministry is not superior to or more significant than the ministry of the laity. The laity and the presbyterate minister equally, yet distinctly, in the Church of Christ. Attwell (2007:1-6) clarifies that "[t]he Clergy embody and serve the Church in its gathering, the Laity embody and serve the incarnate God and become the Church as the Body of Christ when it is dispersed among the nations" (Attwell 2007:6). God calls both laity and clergy to ministry that is distinctive, reliant on and supportive of each other: "The MCSA upholds the co-equal and mutually dependent role of lay and ordained ministers, yet accords a special responsibility to those who are called and set aside to the ordained ministries" (Forster 2007:2). Together, clergy and laity co-operate to fulfil the Mission Statement of the MCSA that "God calls the Methodist people to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ for healing and transformation" (MCSA 2017a:2).

In addition, the MCSA believes that God calls and gifts some within the *laos*, the people of God, to particular non-ordained forms of ministry (MCSA 2016a:12). The church then commissions such persons to ministries as Local Preachers, Evangelists, Bible Women and in Children's Ministries. The MCSA requires an assurance that each person has been called by God to that particular ministry, accepts the discipline, authority and doctrinal beliefs of the MCSA and holds themselves accountable to the relevant circuit and/or connexional authority within the MCSA.

2.4 Conclusion

Recording the history of ordination in the Methodist movement in England and southern Africa has established an understanding of the elements determining the doctrine of ordination in the MCSA today. In summary, the essential elements of the doctrine of ordination include that God chooses some within the priesthood of all believers to be set apart and ordained to the presbyteral ministry of Word and Sacraments, a call which needs to be tested, recognised and affirmed by the Conference. Acceptance as a probationer minister is followed by a time of formation and training that culminates in their acceptance into Full Connexion with the Conference. Being in Full Connexion determines the relationship between the presbyter and the Conference with the ordinands holding themselves accountable to the authority, doctrine and discipline of the Conference. Being in Full Connexion also provides accountability, support and collegiality with other presbyters in the Connexion.

Conference authorises the ordination of the presbyter with the visible signs of the laying on of hands by previously ordained persons, the prayer of invocation to the Holy Spirit and the presentation of a Bible and Certificate of Ordination.[64] Ordination confers authority on the presbyter to function within the Church of Christ under the direction of and accountability to the Conference which annually appoints presbyters to their station or circuit on the understanding that Methodist presbyters participate in an itinerant system of stationing.

[64] The wording of the Certificate of Ordination for 2018 (MCSA 2018b) reads:

> We the undersigned being ordained Ministers acting in accordance with the doctrines and decisions of The Methodist Church of Southern Africa have this day ordained by imposition of our hands to the Ministry of the Word of God and of the Holy Sacraments
>
> the Reverend
>
> Name:. . . . . .
>
> In testimony whereof we subscribe our names this…. (2018b)

The Rev Peter Storey (2018) has captured so many of the essential elements regarding the meaning of ordination in the MCSA that his words, as he recalls his ordination, are worth quoting in full:

> There is something overwhelming about Ordination. It is a moment made holy by its reminders of call and commitment, of love and service, of duty and sacrifice. Stern words are spoken, vows are made, prayers are prayed and hands laid upon your head. You rise from your knees knowing that you have joined a two-millennial-old Order the 'Ministry of Word and Sacrament' and are wedded to it for the rest of your life…. And then, feeling the crushing pressure of seven pairs of hands on my head: this was not a gentle benediction. It was a heavy, heavy transmission of gift and task (Storey 2018:106).

The historical record also indicates that the essential elements relating to the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA remain consistent with those received from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England in spite of the Methodist work being established on the African continent.

This chapter has also confirmed the premise that we must not think of Methodist ecclesiology as being static in its thinking, expression and doctrinal formulations. The ecclesiology of the Methodist movement in England was one of adaptation in response to the historical, political and religious environments in which it found itself. Similarly, there have been adaptations within the southern African context in order to adjust to the unique circumstances and needs of the southern African continent and people. Ethnicity is no longer a factor in the training, ordination, stationing and appointment to positions of leadership. Women are now ordained as presbyters and there is a greater accent on the role of the laity and the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. There have also been adaptations to the practices relating to ordination, for example, the processes in acceptance into Full Connexion and elements in the ordination service.

The preliminary conclusion at this stage in this thesis is that, while there have been adaptations to the doctrine of ordination in the southern African context, the essential ingredients comprising the doctrine of ordination remain very close to those inherited from the Methodist Church in England over two centuries earlier. The changes that have taken place have to some extent corrected the damaging consequences of colonial practices, but the essential ingredients being placed into the African cooking pot of the doctrine of ordination remain predominantly those harvested from our colonial heritage. Chapter 3 will help determine whether or not the doctrine of ordination has been sufficiently modified and contextualised to make it an effective ministry on the African continent for present times. Are

the doctrine and practices of ordination cooking in the pots producing an authentically African flavour, or do they still taste more like European cuisine?

Chapter 3

Has the MCSA adequately adapted its doctrine of ordination from our colonial past?

Introduction

The history of the doctrine and practices relating to the ordination of presbyters in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England and then in the Wesleyan movement in southern Africa has established that the essential ingredients comprising the doctrine of ordination in the MCSA largely remain consistent with those inherited from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England over two centuries ago. Taking into account that there have been adaptations to the doctrine and practices of ordination in the southern African context, the aim of this chapter is to identify whether the ingredients of the theology of ordination being placed into the African cooking pot are sufficiently contextualised from our colonial past and, if not, what challenges need to be overcome.

The impact of placing predominantly colonial ingredients in the pot rather than incorporating ingredients grown in African soil will be determined by examining five aspects of the colonial ecclesiology which continue to influence our southern African context. The five aspects chosen are all products of the colonial ecclesiology, doctrine and practices related to ordination and have been historically challenged within the life of the Southern African Connexion. These aspects are presently receiving the attention of the MCSA and formed part of the concerns raised by persons interviewed during this research. While they are not the only aspects which could be examined, these five examples will assist in answering the research question by determining whether or not the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA have indeed been effectively adapted from our colonial past to our southern African context. Have the adaptations that have taken place adequately transformed and reshaped the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination from our colonial heritage to our southern African context so as to create an appropriate ministry on the African continent?

3.1 The continuing impact of the marginalisation of the laity within the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers

Methodism has always held dearly to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The majority of Rev Wesley's preachers were lay persons as also were his Class Leaders and Stewards. The Methodist work in Southern Africa was initiated by lay persons who continue to enjoy a vital place within the life and ministry of the church.

However, the marginalisation of the laity within the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was a component of the colonial narrative and continues to be so together with the clergy's assumption of a superior role and status. Balia (1991) indicates that the sense of superiority of the missionaries was evidenced in their slowness to ordain the indigenous evangelists, who were laity in terms of Methodist ecclesiology. Missionaries maintained their control over all financial and administrative affairs, even of the lay organisations such as *uNzondelelo* (Balia 1991:27-28, 35-43, 45-48), and the Superintendent Minister and Chairman of the District rejected decisions of the laity in Quarterly Meetings (Xozwa 1989:9-15).

The domination of the clergy over the laity continued into the 1900s as is highlighted in the events leading up to the "Journey to the New Land Convocation" (JNL) when "The Black Methodist Consultation (BMC) sent a message to the preparation committee voicing their dissatisfaction with the top-down approach that the committee had adopted in preparation for the consultation" (Kumalo 2006:253). Their concern was the lack of consultation with grass-roots members and organisations in the MCSA. Consequently, their voices and concerns were not being heard. During the Convocation, held in July 1993, the "[o]rdinary people in the Methodist church voiced their concern that they were not given enough space, training and opportunities to be involved in the life of the church" (Kumalo 2009:34). Accordingly, they were feeling marginalised as "most ministers were using authoritarian and anti-dialogical models to run their churches and this was crippling the mission and life of the church. They were blamed for having turned churches into oppressive domains" (Kumalo 2006:258).

Significantly, the Conference of 1993 committed the MCSA "to value and enhance the gifts and ministry of God's people women and men, laity and clergy, young and old" (MCSA 1993:374 and accepted that "God calls us to release all our members for their particular ministry in the priesthood of all believers. The diversity of gifts must be harnessed in a partnership that serves our collective calling" (1993:375). The Conference of 1998 adopted the "Six calls of our Journey to the New Land" with the third emphasising "[a] rediscovery of

'every member ministry', or the priesthood of all believers" (MCSA 1998:6). This commitment is highlighted in each *Yearbook* from 1999 (MCSA 1999/2000), with the present declaration included in the "5 Imperatives of Mission" of the 2019 *Yearbook* (MCSA 2019a:2).

Arising from the JNL, a number of changes were adopted in order to accentuate the importance of the renewed significance of the input of the laity. The Conference of 1995 agreed to the introduction of a Lay President[65] of Conference "in order to give recognition to the importance of the laity" (MCSA 1995:310) and that "Conference and the Synods will meet in one unitary session of laity and clergy" (1995:310). Analysing the impact of the JNL, Kumalo (2009) indicates that:

> The JNL helped people become aware that the laity is important to the life of the church. Positions that used to be the sole domain of the clergy, such as president of the Young Men's Guild, Women's Manyano and Secretaries of Synods, were opened to the laity.[66] Even the position of the Presiding Bishop is paralleled with that of a Lay President who is an honorary president of the church. There has also been significant change experienced in the composition of committees and representatives in the various structures of the church. Women and youth now have more representation on various committees. As a result, MCSA rules now require that women form a minimum of forty percent at leadership level and other structures within the church (2009:39).

With the renewed belief in the participation of the laity, in 2002 the MCSA declared that: "Because ordination is an act of the whole Church it is important that the ordaining presbyters (elders) include both lay and ordained persons" (MCSA 2002:13). For a limited period of time, circa 2001-2003, the Lay President did participate in the laying on of hands together with the previously ordained presbyters. However, this practice was discontinued as "[t]here was a lot of resistance from the clergy and it was silently done away with because the Bishops did not find a plausible theological rationale" (Nyobole 2018a).

The inclusion of lay persons in the ordination of presbyters has neither been incorporated in subsequent doctrinal statements nor is it presently observed. The present practice is that, while the Lay President is on the stage[67] with the church officials, s/he does not participate in the laying on of hands. Rev John (2018),[68] however, poses the question that: "If in ordination

[65] The Lay President is incorrectly termed the Lay Leader in the *Minutes* of 1997 (MCSA 1997a:2).
[66] See MCSA 1994:322.
[67] The ordination service is hosted in a conference venue/hall. Traditionally, the office bearers would be in the chancel, but due to the number of people in attendance, the ordination services cannot be held in a church building.
[68] I am using a pseudonym in order to protect the person's identity. The person's name is known to me and has given permission to use this quotation. From here on this person will be referred to as John (2018).

the church sets presbyters apart but not above others in ministry, then why do we exclude lay people?" (John 2018). John's belief is that this practice is "exclusionary" and "has no basis in our doctrine. Our policy needs to be reconsidered" (John 2018).

The MCSA continues to cling to the doctrine of "the universal priesthood of believers" (MCSA 2016a:12) recognising that every baptised person is an accredited minister of Jesus Christ. The church believes that those called and set apart to the ordained ministry "hold no priesthood differing in kind from that which is common to the Lord's people, and have no exclusive title to the preaching of the Gospel or to the care of souls… [T]hough the ordained Minister has a different commission and authority from the members of the Laos, the distinction must not be overstressed" (2016a:12, 21). The ministry of the ordained is neither more important nor superior to that of the laity. Forster (2007:1-15) insists that ordination does not confer a superior status to the clergy over the laity as "[t]he MCSA upholds the co-equal and mutually dependent role of lay and ordained ministers" (Forster 2007:2). Clergy and laity should support each other in order to fulfil God's mission to all humankind. Mr J Mabhalane Nkosi, the Lay President of the MCSA in 2018, writing in the February 2018 edition of the *New Dimension* (Nkosi 2018), insists that "[t]he idea of a clergy as a privileged or superior class of a Christian leader is put to death…. It is a right thing to plead with both clergy and laity to always work in partnership" (Nkosi 2018:5).

The ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination of the MCSA are clear that the ministry of the laity is not inferior to that of ordained presbyters and that ordination does not bestow an elite status over the laity (MCSA 2016a:21). Unfortunately, this was not one of the findings in the research of Williams and Landman (2016:159-171) who state "that many ministers are selfish, for whom status and power are important, whose pride and egos play large roles and who do not exhibit servant leadership" (Williams & Landman 2016:167).

Unfortunately, the renewed commitment to the complementary and co-equal ministries of laity and clergy was not and continues not to be accepted by some within the MCSA. Some clergy were threatened by the JNL process with Kumalo (2006:249-266) who noted that "[f]or the clergy there was the fear of losing control of the church to the laity" (Kumalo 2006:261) and that "[o]ne bishop refused to implement the JNL programme in his district arguing that it would not work and his people were not ready for it. This shows problems related to issues of power" (2006:261).

Two practices need to be mentioned which give the impression that presbyters continue to enjoy an elite status. The first relates to the standing and dress code of presbyters who are members of the Uniformed Organisations of the MCSA.[69] The constitution of the Young Men's Guild requires that the Circuit President be a clergy person (MCSA 2009:103) and that the wife of the presbyter or a woman presbyter serves as the Circuit President of the Women's Manyano (MCSA 2018e:101) and the Young Women's Manyano (2018e:110). In contrast, clergy or lay persons may serve in that capacity in the Local Preachers' Association (MCSA 2018e:11). The dress code of a presbyter and a presbyter's wife is distinct from that of other members of the Local Preachers' Association (2018e:50, the Women's Manyano (MCSA 2018e:89), the Young Women's Manyano (2018e:109) and the Young Men's Guild (MCSA 2009:96). These regulations certainly confer a superior status on clergy persons above lay persons in the particular organisations.

The second relates to recent practices incorporated into the funeral service of a bishop. This includes the wearing of a purple stole over a white cassock by the bishops; celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion for the family; handing over of the deceased member to the Presiding Bishop prior to the address to the assembled community; and the sprinkling of holy water on the coffin during the prayer of committal. Kumalo (2018:11) poses the question, "Will these be done during funerals of bishops and clergy only, or for every Methodist?" (Kumalo 2018:11). The view expressed by Malinga (2018) regarding the sacrament of Holy Communion being restricted to the family members was that: "This is not a Methodist thing but an Anglican thing. But they [the Anglicans] don't restrict it to the family but include the whole community. But we do things we don't understand as we want to be different. It is exclusionary" (Malinga 2018).

It must also be noted that the colonial perception of clergy elitism is supported by the traditional African cultural practices of African kingship and the sacralising of human authority. This practice is borne out by the statement of Magezi (2015:1-9) that "African kingship conveys on the ruler sovereignty, power, authority and supremacy over people under one's jurisdiction…. Consciously or unconsciously, church leaders tend to embrace the African kingship approach to leadership and to a lesser extent biblical servant leadership"

[69] The Uniformed Organisations comprise the Local Preachers' Association, Women's Manyano, Young Women's Manyano and Young Men's Guild.

(Magezi 2015:1). Nürnberger (2007) concurs when stating that "Patriarchal-hierarchical authority seems to be the backbone of African spirituality" (Nürnberger 2007:55).[70]

Banda and Senokoane (2009:207-245) also draw our attention to "the growing abuse of power both within the church and without where those who hold power and authority seem so intent to please themselves. This is in view of the tendency, within the African Church, to sacralize human authority and leadership resulting in the aggrandisement and repression of the church members by the church leaders" (Banda & Senokoane 2009:212). Mtshiselwa (2017:403-420) warns of "not elevating a human being to a level of a deity" (Mtshiselwa (2017:415). In her address to the Mission Congress of the MCSA in 2016, Malinga (2016c:1-6) voices her concern that: "Leadership continues to be seen as power over others, domination, about self gain and popularity, insisting on keeping things the same etc." (Malinga 2016c:4). In support of the understanding commonly held and practised within the MCSA of the elevation of the ordained over the laity, my experience as an ordained presbyter is one of being ushered to the stage or area set aside for dignitaries at church events, meetings and funerals and the insistence that this was the proper place for presbyters.

The dilemma facing the MCSA is whether the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is compatible with traditional African culture without leading to the domination of the laity by the clergy.

The question which needs to be investigated is how a decolonised and Africanised doctrine of ordination would correct the perpetuation of the marginalisation of the laity and elevation of the clergy within the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Is equality in ministry between clergy and laity a relevant ingredient in the African cooking pot when persons in power, especially male persons, remain the dominant participants of African and European cultures? My experience is that while presbyters declare their acceptance of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and therefore appear to accept that an equal ministry should be included in the African cooking pot of a decolonised doctrine of ordination, they do not apply such a belief in all their actions and practices. The recent trends of the aggrandisement of bishops at the funeral services of a bishop; the acceptance of a differentiated dress code for clergy and clergy wives in the Uniformed Organisations; the trappings of status and power; and the progressively elaborate dress code of clergy persons lead me to believe that equality

[70] See also Mbiti 1969:182-188 and Muller 2015:3-4.

is not an indigenous African ingredient which will be easily assimilated into the African cooking pot of ordination.

With black persons presently constituting the majority of the membership of the MCSA and the membership of white persons declining, Grassow (2015:1-3) highlights another facet of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers: namely; what role do white persons have in the future of the MCSA? Bearing in mind that the colonial mindset unjustly marginalised the ministry of black persons, how can the MCSA, as a predominantly black church, avoid falling into the same trap? How does the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers apply in this situation? As Grassow asserts: "Simply put: white people do not feel like they belong. They feel excluded from the MCSA because the ethos of the MCSA has become black. It does so by using uniforms, rigid collective organisation, black caucuses, and organisational conventions. This is essential to black spirituality, but means nothing to white identity" (Grassow 2015:2).[71]

Any formulation of the doctrine of ordination to be cooked in African pots will need to take cognisance of the inclusion of all members and their ministries in spite of the traditional African culture which also has a tendency to acquiesce to human authority and leadership. While they may appear to be incompatible, it is vital that within the Order of Presbyters the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and a rejection of clergy elitism are upheld and seen to be practised. How to deal with an Order within the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers in our southern African culture is an aspect of the Africanised doctrine of ordination that is looked at more closely in Chapter 5, section 5.1.

3.2 The continuing impact of parallel structures

One of the adaptations of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa (WMC) to the colonial ecclesiology was to create parallel structures based on ethnicity. This racially discriminatory practice led to differentiating between black and white clergy persons with the words "Native Minister" frequently following the names of black persons but with only a few references to ethnicity for the white clergy persons recorded in the *Minutes* (WMC 1883:8-

[71] Associated questions regarding the assimilation and incorporation of African people from other African countries and cultures now finding themselves in southern Africa could be examined in a future study.

19). In addition, the formation of circuits, determined by ethnicity, was well established by 1883 with the *Minutes* distinguishing between "Native" and "English" Circuits (1883:8-19).[72]

The separation of circuits on the grounds of ethnicity led to the holding of separated sessions of the District Meetings/Synod.[73] This practice of separate European and African sessions was first introduced in 1869 when the Grahamstown District was instructed "by headquarters to hold a separate District Meeting for African Ministers" (Cragg 2011:95), "an arrangement which allowed Africans to use their own language and debate more freely, but divided the ministry along racial lines" (Cragg 2013b:28). This practice spread to other districts and continued subsequent to the establishment of the South African Conference in 1882.

The procedure followed was that "the African section was to meet before the Europeans and would be attended by the Chairman and the European superintendents of African circuits who would have a vote in all matters except the election of representatives to Conference. The Minutes would be submitted unaltered to Conference through the European section" (Cragg 2013b:28) together with the annual circuit report by the superintendent minister.[74] Unfortunately, it was in the European session that significant decisions were made regarding the work in each district without the input of the indigenous clergy (Beukes 2014:39). This practice was not well received by the indigenous preachers, resulting in their rising frustration at white domination and black marginalisation as "[t]hese Synods sadly had limited agendas and European officials offered little by way of freedom and no opportunity for self-governance" (Beukes 2014:38).

The holding of separate Ministerial Sessions of Synod continued until 1948 when that Conference resolved that "where both Sessions are united in so desiring, the European and African Ministerial Sessions of District Synods be allowed to meet together in Joint Ministerial Sessions" (MethSA 1948:44). The racially composed Ministerial Sessions of Synod could now be abolished.

The holding of separate sessions of the District Synod for the clergy and another for the laity was another legacy of the colonial ecclesiology of the Southern African Conference of the Methodist denomination. A Representative Session of Synod, comprising lay delegates from each circuit within the district, circuit officials and the superintendent minister of each circuit was held separately from the Ministerial Session of Synod. Both were presided over by the

[72] See MethSA 1931:18-54.
[73] The District Meetings became known as District Synods and, from 2019, are known as Synods.
[74] See WMC 1886:60-61 for a fuller discussion of the procedures adopted for the separated District Meetings.

Chairman of the District. The annual Conference also consisted of the parallel structures of a Ministerial Session and a separate Representative Session.

A major departure from this practice followed the acceptance of the renewed role of the laity with the Conference of 1995 resolving that "Conference and the Synods will meet in one unitary session of laity and clergy" (MCSA 1995:310). While this adaptation removed a barrier between laity and clergy, this decision created tensions and concerns among many presbyters. My experience was of presbyters voicing their concerns at how the new structures contributed to the failure to hold presbyters accountable, the paucity of theological debate and creative thinking and the limited interaction between colleagues in the Order of Presbyters. Requests for the re-introduction of the Ministerial Sessions are recorded from as early as 2002, being repeated regularly thereafter,[75] and resulting in the Conference of 2015 (MCSA 2016b:104) resolving that:

> While noting the need to deal with matters relating to the theological and moral integrity as well as the general welfare of Presbyters, Conference observes that in the light of our affirmation of our common ministry and the priesthood of all believers, re-introducing a ministerial session is not necessarily the answer. Therefore Conference directs DEWCOM to suggest a possible framework for dealing with matters relating to the order of presbyters within our current structures (MCSA 2016b:104).

Early in 2017, the General Secretary of the MCSA sent a discussion document, *Annual Presbyters' Convocation in the MCSA* (MCSA 2017c:1-2), to all circuits for Circuit Quarterly Meetings[76] and Synods to debate the establishment of an Annual Presbyters' Convocation. The intention was to introduce an annual Presbyters' Convocation that would "offer a safe platform for open, loving but rigorous engagement of clergy with each other and with ministerial issues" (MCSA 2017c:1) and deal with "matters relating to theological and moral integrity as well as the general welfare of its Presbyters" (2017c:1). Significantly, the intention was for the Convocation to "provide an intentional, formal structure with intentional practices for building up ministers" (2017c:1). The document highlighted that "[t]he Proposed Convocation is not to be confused with the traditional Ministerial Session of Synod. It will have no deciding powers on matters that belong to the Synod agenda but where there are serious issues of concern it shall make recommendations. It is a stand-alone gathering that does not have to be linked to Synod in dates and venue – except when necessary. It shall take place prior to the Synod" (MCSA 2017c:2).

[75] See MCSA 2003:157, MCSA 2004a:45 and MCSA 2006:84.
[76] The Circuit Quarterly Meeting is the administrative and decision-making body of each circuit which reports to the Synod.

In the light of the responses by the circuits, the Conference of 2017 resolved to introduce an Annual Presbyters' Convocation from 2018 and whose purview would be to deal with matters directly relating to the ordained ministry while making recommendations to the Synod, comprised of clergy and laity, for adoption.

The resolution is a major amendment to the processes relating to ordination and the ordained ministry and needs to be quoted in full (MCSA 2018a:93):

> **ANNUAL PRESBYTERS' CONVOCATION**
>
> Conference resolves to implement as from 2018, the mandatory gathering of annual Presbyters' Convocations in Districts and directs EMMU in conjunction with Human Resources Unit & Revisions Committee to develop a standardized procedure. (For the full motivation see EMMU Report.)
>
> The Convocation is to be attended by all Probationer and Ordained Presbyters (active and Supernumeraries). This is to offer a safe platform for open, loving but rigorous engagement of clergy with each other and with ministerial issues. The agenda shall include:
>
> 1. Conversation on the vocation of clergy (strengthening understanding of the call as well as the order of presbyters).
>
> Engagement with contemporary theological/ doctrinal/ ethical issues as referred to the Convocation.
>
> Accounting in terms of the provisions in 5.4 Order of Business for Synods – (L&D page 189).[77] This takes place at the Convocation. (Remembering that any Member of the MCSA may raise objections to any Minister in terms of L&D Ed 12 Revised, para 11.3.)
>
> *Discipline questions are to be dealt with at Convocation and not at Synod. A report is to be given to Synod.*
>
> Oral Examination of the Ordinands (2.7.2 Order of Business for Synods.[78])
>
> *This allows for an in-depth theological questioning and debate - not humiliation. A report shall be given from the Convocation to Synod*.
>
> Presbyters' Undertaking (L&D 4.17)
>
> All Presbyters shall make a renewal of Ordination vows and repeat annually at the Convocation, the undertakings made at Candidature and Ordination as per L&D 4.17[79] (MCSA 2018a:93).

The significance of the newly established Presbyters' Convocation is that matters pertaining to the vocation of the clergy, engagement with contemporary theological/doctrinal/ethical issues, disciplinary matters, the oral examination of ordinands and the reaffirmation by all presbyters of their ordination vows and undertakings made when they candidated and were

[77] Paragraph 5.4 relates to asking, "Is there an objection to any Minister or Probationer?" (MCSA 2016a:189)
[78] Paragraph 2.7.2 reads: "Report on Oral Examinations" (MCSA 2016a:188).
[79] Paragraph 4.17 refers to the examination at Synod of the Candidates relating to "their Christian experience, call to the Ministry, belief in Methodist doctrine, and attachment o Methodist discipline" (MCSA 2016a:32).

ordained are provided for (MCSA 2018a:93). The new procedures allow for increased accountability of ordained clergy to one another and increased participation in the examination, formation and discipline of those offering as candidates for the ordained ministry as well as their continued formation and spirituality after ordination.

That the MCSA regards the holding of the Convocations as an important element for the members of the Order of Presbyters is evident from the theological/doctrinal/ethical issues referred to the Synod Convocations for 2019. These included an engagement with the resolution on furlough (long leave)[80] for presbyters that was adopted at the Conference of 2018 (MCSA 2019a:86) and with the issue of sexual harassment in the light of the Sexual Harassment Policy of the MCSA that is recorded in the *Book of Order* (MCSA 2016a:209-215) and supplemented by the resolution of Conference recorded in the *Yearbook* of 2019 (MCSA 2019a:84).

The holding of a Presbyters' Convocation has not diluted the commitment of the MCSA to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers as the laity continues to participate in the decision-making processes relating to the ordained ministry at Synod and Conference. This arrangement would ensure that presbyters have the opportunity to fulfil their responsibilities as colleagues in Full Connexion and at the same time ensure that the laity can fulfil their role in the common ministry ascribed to by the MCSA.

In summary, the question which needs to be investigated is whether the steps taken by the MCSA are adequate in terms of a decolonised and Africanised doctrine of ordination, or will we continue to place ingredients not grown in African soil into the pot? The colonial heritage of separating clergy from each other on account of their ethnicity and of separating clergy from laity in the decision-making courts of the church no longer prevail, with parallel structures being discontinued. These adaptations certainly bring the processes in the MCSA into better alignment with the non-racist trends in post-apartheid southern African structures. The concern of presbyters for a formalised structure at which matters specifically related to the acceptance, formation and accountability of presbyters and doctrinal matters to be considered has been responded to with the formation of the annual Presbyters' Convocation, a concept in keeping with the holding of an *imbizo*[81] in southern African culture.

[80] Presbyters are entitled to long leave of 60 calendar days following every six years of service (MCSA 2016a:113-114).

[81] According to the Oxford Living Dictionaries (n.d.), an *imbizo* is "A gathering, usually called by a traditional leader".

3.3 The continuing impact of stationing and remunerating presbyters according to ethnicity

One of the deep seated consequences of the colonial ecclesiology and practices adopted from the WMC was to station and remunerate presbyters on a differentiated basis according to their racial classification as "European Ministers, Coloured and Indian Ministers and African Ministers" (MethSA 1967:235-237). The regulations provided for the stipulated stipend benefits received by white clergy to be appreciably higher than those received by the clergy of the other ethnic groups. It is disquieting to note that the colonial practice of differentiated stipends according to race was discontinued only in 1973 (MethSA 1973:103-104), ninety years after the MCSA had become an independent Conference. Associated with this practice was that presbyters stationed in urban and more affluent circuits received higher stipends than those in rural and poorer ones. Some circuits were not financially viable and their clergy didn't receive even the minimum stipulated while others were receiving significant additional benefits above the stipulated stipend scale.

Presbyters were also stationed according to their ethnicity and that of the members of the circuits to which they were appointed. Few white presbyters were stationed in black circuits, placing them in a privileged position. The outcome of these racial policies is highlighted by Mtshiselwa (2015b:1-9) indicating that "many a white ordained minister is not stationed in a rural area wherein poverty is at its peak. Therefore, it means that in terms of the stationing system of the MCSA, white ministers are immune to being placed in a context of poverty where they could possibly leave without a source of income" (Mtshiselwa 2015b:7). Being in Full Connexion and a covenantal relationship with the MCSA, "no legally enforceable contract shall exist at any time between the Church or any of its Circuits on the one hand and a Minister on the other hand, in respect of the payment of stipends, allowances or any other material benefit, in cash or kind, the provision of a station or any benefit of any kind which may have at any stage accrued to a Minister" (MCSA 2016a:30).[82]

The legacy of those colonial policies and the covenantal relationship are evident in that some clergy persons do not receive a monthly stipend in 2018. This is evident from the report of the General Treasurer to the Conference of 2018 that "As at 20th May 2018, 17% of circuits

[82] A response to the impact of the covenantal relationship on presbyters is found on page 191 of this study.

were over 2 months in arrears,[83] totalling R4.1 million. This not only impacts negatively on the administration but, more seriously, affects agents directly. If stipends are not paid, this means that the minister would not have contributed to their pension fund" (MCSA 2019a:30).

The policy of stationing and remunerating presbyters contributes to certain presbyters being appointed to poorer, predominantly rural circuits and black clergy persons experiencing economic marginalisation. As pension benefits are calculated on the monthly stipend received by a presbyter, many black presbyters are disadvantaged financially, both during their time in active ministry as well as on their compulsory retirement (superannuating) at the age of 65 years, when they receive a decreased pension. While stationing and stipend scales according to ethnicity have been abolished, what has not been abolished is the economic marginalisation of presbyters appointed to poorer circuits and those who do not receive their monthly stipends as a consequence of being in Full Connexion and in a covenantal relationship with the Conference.

Efforts to correct the inequality of stipends and benefits received and the injustice and unfairness of the remuneration policies have long been a concern of the Conference. The "inequality of stipends being paid to Ministers of the same seniority" (MCSA 1992:24) and serving in similar positions of leadership within the MCSA was the centre of debate in the 1990s and early 2000s. Consequently, the Conference of 2003 resolved to "reject any system for giving stipends to ministers that causes unfair disparities in stipends and adopts the principle of parity in stipends" (MCSA 2004a:44). In 2004, the concept of parity in stipends whereby "everyone receives the same, was overwhelmingly rejected. The principle of equity in the sense of justice and fairness was endorsed" (MCSA 2007:72).

The Connexional Task Team on Parity of Stipends was established to seek "ways in which to bring about a more fair, just and equitable stipend policy" (MCSA 2008:17). Storey (2007:1-22), on behalf of DEWCOM, declared that "[i]t is our conviction that the present stipend system must change. We believe that it should be converted to a system that is able to hold the values or principles of fairness and freedom together in a creative relationship, while at the same time remaining open to the ever deepening challenge of Jesus to generously and sacrificially share for the sake of the well-being of others" (Storey 2007:11).

[83] The provisions in the *Book of Order* (2016a) allow for stipends to be withheld from a clergy person "if a Circuit does not meet its assessment or any other financial commitment for three consecutive months" (MCSA 2016a:82) to the MCSA.

In 2007 corrective measures were instituted whereby presbyters receiving more than the stipulated minimum were encouraged to "voluntarily contribute a minimum of 1% of their total stipend (minimum and additional) to a Voluntary Stipend Fund. Circuits and organisations are also encouraged to contribute to the Fund" (MCSA 2007:72). The voluntary arrangement became legislated in 2010 with circuits now contributing to the Stipend Augmentation Fund "in terms of an agreed formula" (MCSA 2010:94) where the monthly stipend and allowances received by a presbyter exceeded a stipulated amount. Consequently, the stipends of those who were paid the least were now augmented "to bring them up to a minimum overall income package" (MCSA 2018a:149). It was reported to the Conference of 2018 that "45 ministers benefited" (MCSA 2019a:167) from the Stipend Augmentation Fund in 2017.

Should a decolonised and Africanised doctrine of ordination include elements from the principle of equity of stipends, with the emphasis on justice and fairness, together with that of parity of stipends, with the emphasis on sameness and equality? The understanding in 2004/5 was that "the principle of absolute parity would be disastrous and very de-motivating" (MCSA 2007:72). The question to be asked is whether this response is appropriate and adequate in a new model of ordination. Additionally, are the continuing appeals for equality and justice in keeping with cooking the doctrine in African pots? It is my understanding that such appeals are equally relevant in the present when the MCSA is a predominantly black church as they were when it was a predominantly white one. The ingredients placed into the cooking pot need to correct the financial injustices of past and present policies which economically marginalise some clergy persons and their families.

Another adaptation adopted by the MCSA is "to address past injustices which affected Pensions currently paid to Supernumeraries" (MCSA 2010:85) as a consequence of the previous stipend policy negatively impacting those presbyters who were disadvantaged by being stationed in poorer circuits. Historical injustices arising from the previous differentiated stipend scales according to race and the appointment of black presbyters to rural or poor circuits, impacting their pension benefits, need to be addressed. The 2009 Conference committed itself to "a vision of parity of pension(s)" (MCSA 2010:85-56) with the establishment of the Supernumerary Reserve Fund (MCSA 2013:81) in order to supplement the pension of those presbyters who were previously disadvantaged. In practice, this has had the desired outcome for those who suffered most under the previous dispensation (MCSA 2018a:152), and is appropriate for a decolonised doctrine of ordination.

However, a concern arises in that some pensioners are receiving a monthly pension of less than R4 000 a month after having "served continuously in a Circuit or Connexional appointment for more than 10 (ten) years immediately prior to superannuation" (MCSA 2016a:116). In fact, they could have served for even longer than ten years. Awareness that this arrangement is unacceptable is evident from a letter of the MCSA (MCSA 2018g) indicating that "a pensioner's contribution to the Medical Aid will be, not a flat rate as in the past, but a percentage of pension, similar to the case of Active Ministers" (MCSA 2018g). Moreover, "[p]ensioners whose pension is under R4 000 a month will not be charged, and their contribution will be sponsored by the Church" (2018g). Supernumerary presbyters and their families are also anxious in terms of the pension payment policy of the MCSA that an annual increase in pensions "should be based on 90% of the increase in the CPI for the previous calendar year, which suggests an increase equal to 4.2% effective 1 July 2018 (inflation 4.7% for 2017)" (MCSA 2019a:34). The concern is that all supernumerary ministers are badly affected by the MCSA's stipend and pension policies of the past and will continue to feel those effects into the future.

The question which needs to be investigated is whether the steps taken by the MCSA are adequate in terms of a decolonised and Africanised doctrine of ordination, or will we continue to place ingredients not grown in African soil into the African pot? Have we adequately dealt with the impact of old colonial practices on the well-being of those who were and are disadvantaged and who struggle to eke out a living on their stipends and/or pensions? It is my contention that an Africanised doctrine of ordination needs to give attention to these concerns, with proposals being presented in Chapter 6, sections 6.3-6.4.

3.4 The continuing impact of the marginalisation of women presbyters

An important facet of the colonial ecclesiology was the reticence to ordain women and appoint them to positions of leadership (Heitzenrater 1995:331, 349). Wesley's attitude to women preachers was an ambiguous one. In a letter of 1769, Wesley advised Sarah Crosby to "keep as far away from what is called preaching as you can; therefore, never take a text; never speak in a continued discourse, without some break…" (Tyerman 1973c:41). In contrast, in 1771, Wesley affirmed Miss Bosanquet's right to preach "[o]n your having an *extraordinary* call… St Paul's ordinary rule was, 'I permit not a women to speak in a

congregation.' Yet, in extraordinary cases, he made a few exceptions; at Corinth in particular" (Tyerman 1973c:112).

Both during the lifetime of Wesley and following his death, the struggle for the acceptance of women into the ordained ministry and for them to serve in leadership positions in the Methodist movement and Church in England was waged "on scriptural grounds and contemporary views of female roles" (Rack 2011:27). It is significant that the first women in the Methodist Church of Great Britain were ordained as presbyters only in 1974 (Methodist Church 2014).

In contrast to the reticence of the Wesleyan Methodists to utilise women in their ministry, was that of the major offshoot from established Methodism in the nineteenth century, The Society of the Primitive Methodists. In this branch of Methodism, women were used extensively in preaching, were ordained and served in leadership positions. (Primitive Methodist Church: 2020).

Marginalisation and discrimination on the grounds of gender were practised by the Wesleyan colonial missionaries who were all male and reserved ordination for male persons in keeping with the doctrine of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England. When the Rev Kilner, representing the Wesleyan Missionary Society in England, recommended to the Conference that a large number of black helpers be ordained following his visit to South Africa in 1880, not one was a female preacher.

In the 90 years following the South African Connexion becoming an independent Connexion, not a single woman was ordained to the presbyteral ministry. Women who felt God's call were denied this privilege and required to candidate for the Deaconess Order,[84] to the ministry of "full-time pastoral service" (MCSA 1994:369) and not to the ministry of Word and Sacraments. [85]

This prohibition, together with objections and calls to oppose the ordination of women presbyters based on a conservative interpretation of Biblical texts, particularly the teachings of the Apostle Paul, formed the basis of arguments against the ordination of women. These factors are evidenced in the wording of the resolution of the 1966 Conference to investigate

[84] The Conference of 1944 resolved to formalise the South African Order of the Deaconess Order (Oosthuizen 1990:54). The Conference of 1993 renamed the Order to the Order of Deacons as both men and women could candidate for acceptance into the Order (MCSA 1993:239). In addition, "all members became known as Deacons, although female members may choose to be known as Deaconesses" (MCSA 1994:369).

[85] As Deacons are ordained to the ministry of Word and Service, they are not permitted to preside at the celebration of the sacraments.

the possibility "that women be admitted to the Ordained Ministry, provided that a study of the Biblical and Theological implications concerned reveal no objection to such a move" (MethSA 1966:209). Mudimeli (2011) draws our attention to the correlation between the interpretation of Scripture and the marginalisation of women, stating: "Although the Bible is full of life-giving news for women, but the focus on texts of oppression and the patriarchal interpretation of the Bible have been used to the disadvantage of women" (Mudimeli 2011:3). Mkhwanazi (2014) confirms the reliance on the Pauline understanding of Mudimeli stating, "The contention in the New Testament is the Pauline theology" (Mkhwanazi 2014:3).[86]

While all the District Synods were not "in favour of opening the ministry to women" (Dimension 1972a:1), the Conference of 1972 accepted the principle of the ordination of women (MethSA 1972:66), leading to the ordination of the first woman presbyter, Constance Oosthuizen, in 1976. Oosthuizen was accepted as a candidate for the Deaconess Order in 1954, was a student in the Training College of the Wesley Deaconess Order in England and was then ordained by the South African Conference as a presbyter in 1976 (Oosthuizen 1990:75). She was followed by Rev Dorothy Spink in 1978, with the first black woman, Rev Nikiwe Mavis Mbilini, being ordained in 1985, both of whom had served as Deaconesses (Mkhwanazi & Kgatla 2015:186). This significant amendment to the doctrine of ordination meant that the presbyteral office was no longer the sole domain of male persons in spite of the fact that "the first three women to be ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament were already ordained in the ministry of word and service, Constance Oosthuizen, Mavis Mbilini and Dorothy Spink" (Lebaka-Ketshabile 2016:3).

The acceptance of women to the presbytery did not mean that this would lead to equal opportunities for both male and female presbyters. Female presbyters now experienced marginalisation through a reticence to appoint them to positions of leadership at both circuit and district levels as well as being marginalised in their circuits as a result of patriarchy. This sexist practice was in contravention of the doctrine of ordination which does not distinguish between those in leadership positions on the grounds of gender or prevent women from fulfilling their roles as presbyters.

Another factor influencing the marginalisation of women presbyters was that of patriarchy in African cultures. Drawing on studies of the World Council of Churches regarding the experiences of African women, Oduyoye (2001) shows that "[n]owhere do we find churches

[86] See also Marumo 2016:63-64 and Mudimeli 2011:76, 82-91.

in which the unity of the Church is seriously pursued when it comes to the unity of humanity, and certainly not the unity as regards the genders, for nowhere are women and men treated as being on an equal footing in the Church" (Oduyoye 2001:80-81).[87] The insight from Kretzschmar (2009:217-231) is that "[w]omen are often on the receiving end of a 'double' message. They experience God's love and acceptance, but they also experience exclusion and ridicule, even violence, from men in the Church" (Kretzschmar 2009:223).

Patriarchy has to do with the power and dominance of male persons together with a masculine epistemology and interpretation of Scripture. Authors describe the elements of patriarchal African culture as including the "depreciating view of women and biblical texts that support such stereotypes" (Mkhwanazi & Kgatla 2015:181) as well as the belief that "women lacked the capacity to rule" (Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) 2014:489). The "Sepedi or Northern Sotho proverb *Tša etwa ke ye tshadi pele, di wela ka leope,* literally translated as 'once they are led by a female one, that is, a cow, they will fall into a donga[88]'" (Mtshiselwa & Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) 2016:1-2) is quoted to support such a view. Other elements include the subservience of women to men, of not having a voice (Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) 2012:205) and that "women often think of themselves as less important and less valuable than men" (Mtshiselwa 2015a:4). Mkhwanazi (2014) explains that "patriarchy elevates men above women…. It is about a deeply grooved pattern of male-dominated leadership that damages women" (Mkhwanazi 2014:111). Kumalo (2017:40-56) is adamant that "African sub-cultures in the connexion, e.g. Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, Pedi, Swazi, Xhosa and Shangaan, have played a very prominent role in preserving patriarchy in the church, which has resulted in the marginalisation of women" (Kumalo 2017:54).

Mkhwanazi and Kgatla (2015:180-197) draw our attention to the fact that the colonial ecclesiology, the conservative interpretation of Scripture and oppressive elements of patriarchal culture were disadvantaging women and enforcing male dominance in the MCSA (Mkhwanazi & Kgatla 2015:181). Their views are supported by the understanding of Marumo (2016:55-70) that "[w]omen in ministry were allowed into ministry with the baggage of tribalism that considered women subordinate to men and to be treated as such. It is a notion that has never been eradicated" (Marumo 2016:58).

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[87] See also Ackermann D, Draper J.A. & Mashinini, E. (eds), *Women Hold Up Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa* (1991: 93-166) for a discussion relating to feminist theology from an African perspective.

[88] A donga is a gully or ravine.

The exclusion of women who believe that God has called them to the ordained ministry and their continued exclusion from positions in the structures and hierarchy of the church is deeply injurious and marginalises capable persons. Unfortunately, these colonial and African cultural ingredients continue to be added to the African cooking pot of ordination.

3.4.1 Struggles faced by women presbyters

Evidence of the continuing struggles and marginalisation of women as presbyters in the MCSA is supported by statements of Conference, the experience of women presbyters and statistics. Each of these will now be developed.

The first supporting evidence is that of statements by the Conference, recorded in the *Minutes* and *Yearbooks* revealing the acceptance of the ordination of women and affirming their role within the structures of the church (MCSA 1992:340-341) but also recording the difficulties they face in performing the ministry to which they are ordained.[89] Sixteen years following the ordination of Rev Oosthuizen, the concerns and frustrations led the Conference of 1992 (MCSA 1992:339) to resolve that:

> Conference reaffirms its commitment to the ordination of women, but notes that the fuller implications of this practice are now clearer, and therefore resolves to establish a working group to address, inter alia, the following by the November Planning Meeting:
>
> difficulties facing women working in a male-dominated environment;
>
> the full implications for married women;
>
> the Stationing of women;
>
> prejudicial decisions taken by some Church courts concerning women (MCSA 1992:339).

Between 1990 and 1994, numerous decisions were taken by Conference relating to the concerns, marginalisation in stationing and the lack of women presbyters in leadership roles. The 1992 Conference resolved that "all structures within the Church should include at least 40% women" (MCSA 1992:340) and "that all new documents, reports, publications, liturgies, prayers, songs, hymns and sermons use inclusive language" (1992:341).

A Women Ministers' Consultation was introduced in 1993 to provide a platform where women presbyters could support one another and promote the work of women in the MCSA (MCSA 1993:294). The Consultation continues to meet annually with the declared purpose of

[89] See MCSA 1994:294; MCSA 1996:178-179; MCSA 2002:67-68 and MCSA 2016b:104.

being "[c]alled to encourage and empower women in and for the ordained ministry" (MCSA 2016d).

The concern of the minimal inclusion of both lay and presbyteral women in ministry was raised at the JNL in July 1993. Kumalo (2006:249-266) documents the concern and the resolve of the conference emphasising that "Linked to the call for unity was the recognition of gender imbalances within the church. So this call helped to affirm the ministry of women in the church and was accompanied by intentional affirmative strategies for women to offer for the ministry" (Kumalo 2006:257).

The Connexional Executive of 2001, again, expressed their concern at the prejudicial behaviour against women ministers, instructing the "Executive Secretary, in consultation with the Women Ministers' Committee, to conduct a survey of the problems faced by women ministers within the Connexion, the primary aim being to address prejudices against women ministers and to challenge those Districts that do not have a substantial number of women ministers to redress imbalances" (MCSA 2002:67-68).

2016 was a memorable year with the Conference recognising and celebrating 40 years of the ordination of women in the MCSA. The Conference signed a Commitment Charter which "commits the leadership of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa to creating an environment for the advancement of the leadership of women in the MCSA" (MCSA 2018a:302).

An extensive resolution was accepted at the Conference of 2016 regarding Women in Ministry which raised continuing concerns relating to discrimination on the grounds of gender, as recorded in the *Yearbook* (MCSA 2017a):

> In recognising and celebrating the 40 years of the ordination of women in the MCSA (Res 2.38, YB 2016, p.104) and the challenges faced by women ministers, Conference directs the Office of the Presiding Bishop to appoint an inclusive Task Team to attend to all matters that will affirm and elevate the ministry of women within the MCSA. Among other things, these include the constitutive focus of Women in Ministry consultation, namely, discrimination and justice issues relating to the ministry of women; representation of women in all structures of the church; reviewing and changing legislative and election processes; removing barriers to leadership; development of materials for addressing gender bias and sexism; and the holistic empowerment of women in the ministry (2017a:95).

In addition, the Conference of 2016 (MCSA 2017a:97) resolved to be pro-active in the election of female clergy to positions of senior leadership, declaring:

> Conference notes that the ongoing failure of the MCSA to elect female clergy to the office of Bishop and other positions of senior leadership denies our understanding of what it means to be the body of Christ, impoverishes the church, undermines its witness and compromises its commitment to justice, healing, and transformation. Conference directs the Office of the Presiding Bishop to set up a task team to explore this ongoing reality and make recommendations for changes in the legislative processes of identifying, nominating and appointing suitable candidates for these roles that would address these concerns (2017a:97).

Being aware of the disparity between intention and reality, the MCSA has taken two important decisions to deal with the inequality in the representation of ordained women in the leadership structures of the church. The first is the affirmation of the requirement that "... all structures within the Church should include at least 40% women" (MCSA 2016a:237),[90] requiring the "Connexional Executive[91] to be intentional about the appointment of Women Ministers as Circuit Superintendents as a means of enabling gender equality and inclusion in senior leadership in the church" (MCSA 2017a:244). The second is the resolution accepted by the Conference of 2017 and referred to the relevant structures for report back to the Conference of 2018 that, "at any given time there should be at least five women Bishops within the MCSA" (MCSA 2018a:106) in the light of the fact that "of the eight bishops either re-elected or newly inducted between 2016 and 2018, no ordained women were inducted as a bishop" (Morgan 2017b). This proposal was accepted by the Conference of 2018 (MCSA 2019a:84) in order to correct the ongoing marginalisation of women presbyters.

The second supporting evidence is the experience of women presbyters. Malinga (2016a:1-15), who was ordained in 1988, relates how women probationers and presbyters experienced resistance from both "men and women – from circuits and ministers" (Malinga 2016a:6) based on cultural and not only biblical or theological grounds. "There were debates about whether women should go into the pulpit, serve communion when they are on their periods etc." (2016a:6). She also records how she experienced rejection and abuse from both superintendents and congregations, felt isolated "with no role models.... People [were] unsure what to call you or how to relate to you… and [you were] seen as a threat to the known Black structure of the MCSA" (2016a:6). Mkhwanazi and Kgatla (2015:180-197) tell of how women were restricted to certain roles, were not allowed to perform funerals and how their heads had to be covered during services (Mkhwanazi & Kgatla 2015:181).

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[90] The Conference of 1992 introduced such a requirement (MCSA 1992:340).

[91] It is the Connexional Executive which finalises the stationing of presbyters and recommends the changes to the annual Conference for their ratification.

However, it is important to clarify that a women presbyter was also not always accepted with open arms in the traditionally white section of the MCSA. This view is supported by Mkhwanazi and Kgatla (2015:180-197) who state that "women were treated badly in both black and white Societies" (Mkhwanazi & Kgatla 2015:187).

The experience of women presbyters is that they continue to face the challenges associated with being stationed to suitable appointments by the Conference. Mkhwanazi and Kgatla (2015:180-197) declare:

> Men ministers who are in the leadership of the church do not invite ordained women ministers to come and work in their circuits in order for the women ministers to gain experience through the men ministers' mentorship, and the women do not feel welcomed in the church. In the majority of cases, many ordained women ministers are stationed in rural circuits where they cannot cope with challenges such as African traditional stereotypes against women in ordained ministry" (2015:181-182).

The testimony of women presbyters extends to their continuing struggle to serve in positions of leadership at the circuit, synod and connexional level. Malinga (2016a:1-15) records that, "The leadership model of the black church continues to ignore women clergy as well as leadership capabilities of women. This issue tends to be discussed with emotions and therefore without hearing each other. As long as there are positions of leadership that are 'ring fenced' for some people, across genders, the church is denying itself a possibility of excellence" (Malinga 2016a:10).

The premise of Malinga also relates to the Office of the General Secretary of the MCSA. When the Conference of 2018 elected a male presbyter to follow the woman presbyter then serving as the General Secretary from 2020, there was a vehement reaction within the MCSA. Writing in *New Dimension*, Rev Prins (2018) stated, "I find the election of a male replacement into this office after the incumbent has only served one term in this position as very disappointing and indeed a very sad and terribly low point in the life of the MCSA" (Prins 2018:13).

A further example of the continuing painful experiences of women presbyters is seen in the derogatory and sexist remarks, made from his African cultural perspective, by a presbyter serving in the Office of the Presiding Bishop regarding women in the church. In response to his utterances, the MCSA (MCSA 2018f) issued a communiqué declaring:

> The Methodist Church of Southern Africa would like to distance itself from the offensive and shocking utterances of our minister and state unequivocally that his views are in no way representative of the position of the church and its functional duties.

> We note with dismay the blatant disrespect and portrayal of women who are characterised in a dismissive, humiliating and degrading caricature. The objectifying of the anatomy of women and its link to culture and religion is not only unacceptable but also equally distasteful.
>
> We maintain that the opinions expressed are both offensive and highly intolerable particularly in our current climate in which women are dehumanised, abused and disrespected (MCSA 2018f).

The impact of patriarchy on ordained women superintendents continues to be experienced by women presbyters. In the report on Women in Ministry to the Conference of 2016, Rev Mpuqa described the challenges facing women in ministry as: "Women Superintendents are just tokenism. Most of these women's voices are silenced. Males, even those who are not in active Ministry, remain 'The Voice' in all matters affecting the Circuit where the Superintendent is, according to our Book of Order, the official head of the Church in the Circuit" (MCSA 2017a:244). The frequent testimony of women presbyters is, nevertheless, that culture and not Scripture is the basis of the marginalisation and discrimination against them.

And thirdly, the marginalisation of women presbyters in the MCSA is supported by statistics. Malinga (2016b:1-6) observes that it took "160 years from the time of Barnabas Shaw to 1976 to accept in principle that the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ is to be shared by men and women" (Malinga 2016b:3). When the MCSA celebrated 40 years of ordained women in the ministry in 2016, it was reported by the General Secretary of Conference, the Rev Charmaine Morgan, that "17% of our clergy are women, 4% of our Superintendents are women, and no women are Bishops. We will celebrate our victories in the coming year in various ways, but we still have a far way to go before we can say we have achieved our goals" (Morgan 2016a:21).

The declarations of Conference, experiences of women presbyters and statistics support the ongoing appeal for an end to the marginalisation of women presbyters arising from both a colonial legacy and a cultural heritage, neither of which enjoy theological or Scriptural support. Lebaka-Ketshabile (2016:1-5) is but one author among many appealing for change.[92] In her address to Conference 2016, Libuseng Lebaka-Ketshabile stated: "Although the Church had said yes to the ordination of women, attitudes and practices of a patriarchal culture still continues to hinder the women's progress in the church" (Lebaka-Ketshabile

[92] See also Mkhwanazi & Kgatla (2015:180-197), Malinga (2016a), Matthew (2014), Marumo (2017), MCSA (2017a) and Mudimeli (2011).

2016:4). Marumo (2016:55-70) is of the opinion that "segregation and marginalising women are sins and must be treated as such" (Marumo 2016:68).

Have the adaptations made by the MCSA to address the marginalisation of women been sufficiently contextualised or not? The conundrum is that a strong patriarchal narrative continues to be experienced both within southern African society and the MCSA together with strong calls by many for this practice to be discontinued. It is clear that the extensive resolutions adopted at the Conference of 2018 and the outburst of a presbyter in leadership within the MCSA in 2018 confirm that the ingredients which marginalise women presbyters continue to be placed into the African cooking pot of ordination. The question which needs to be investigated is how a decolonised and Africanised doctrine of ordination would correct the perpetuation of the marginalisation of women presbyters, a practice maintained by a patriarchal narrative, and which causes them such pain. Proposals in this regard are presented in Chapter 6, section 6.4.

3.5 The continuing impact of the marginalisation of presbyteral couples in same-sex relationships

The dilemma being faced by the MCSA regarding marriage and couples in same-sex relationships is proving a huge challenge. The church, in keeping with the colonial understanding that marriage is "between a man and a woman" (Methodist Church 1999:367) describes the implications for presbyteral couples in a same-sex relationship and ministry to members in a same-sex relationship as "a journey of discovering what it means to be part of a church which embraces many different and even opposing views" (MCSA 2006:75). The Conference of 2003 instructed that the DEWCOM publication 'Christians and same-sex relationships: A Discussion Guide for the Methodist People of Southern Africa,' be referred to "Districts, Ministers Retreats and Circuit Quarterly Meetings for discussion" (MCSA 2004a:74). The debate that followed revealed that "within the MCSA there are widely divergent convictions on this issue that are sincerely and passionately held by both clergy and laity who are deeply committed to following Christ and who hold to the authority of Scripture" (MCSA 2011:105). In spite of this acknowledgement, the Conference of 2006 "directed that until Conference has pronounced on the matter, the MCSA continues to recognise marriage as only between a man and a woman. Ministers were urged to refrain

from officiating at same-sex unions" (MCSA 2007:50). That directive remains in place in 2019.

Significant aspects in the journey relating to the same-sex marriage debate were identified at the Conference of 2010. The first was of the Conference calling "for an ongoing process of respectful dialogue and truthful engagement between those holding differing views, not with the intention of ultimately having one mind on this issue, which is unlikely, but rather to come to a deepened understanding of what it means to be the one body of Christ" (MCSA 2011:105). Unity within diversity was the foundation from which the debate was being conducted. That the "MCSA is, *de facto*, a church with divergent convictions on this issue that have theological integrity" (2011:106) was noted.

The second aspect was of the Conference of 2010 declaring that "[t]here is a current theological inconsistency within the MCSA where it allows this divergence of conviction to be held without the freedom for such divergence of conviction to be exercised" (2011:106). In order to give practical expression to this new understanding, the Conference proposed establishing "how the MCSA can create the space for such divergence of conviction to be exercised in ways that will preserve the integrity and unity of the church" (2011:106).

The response to that instruction is contained in the DEWCOM report to the Conference of 2017 (MCSA 2018a:288-297) proposing that:

(i) Methodist ministers are free to follow their conscience in the kind of pastoral care they offer to LGBTIQ persons;

(ii) Methodist ministers stationed in South Africa who wish to apply to be licensed marriage officers under the Civil Unions Act of 2006 are free to do so… (2018a:292).

To date, this proposal has not been accepted and the status quo remains that presbyters of the MCSA are not permitted to enter into a Civil Union with their partner nor are they allowed to officiate at same-sex unions.

What is significant in this proposal is that the Conference is giving credence to Wesley's insistence on the role of conscience relating to his practice that: "'To follow my own conscience, without any regard to consequences, or prudence, so called,' is a rule which I have closely followed for many years, and hope to follow to my life's end…. I have no right over your conscience, nor you over mine; therefore, both you and I must follow our own conscience" (Tyerman 1973b:248, 256).

The question which needs to be investigated is how a decolonised and Africanised doctrine of ordination could, and should, be more adequately adapted to allow for the Civil Unions of clergy persons and for presbyters to officiate at Civil Union ceremonies. Recommendations as to how the marginalisation of couples in same-sex relationships can be curtailed in an Africanised doctrine of ordination are proposed in Chapter 6, section 6.4.

3.6 Summary and conclusion

In Chapters 2 and 3 the ingredients of the doctrine of ordination in the MCSA have been described indicating that the MCSA ordains those who believe that God has called them to the presbyteral ministry, have been tested and formed and, on acceptance of being subject to the doctrines and discipline of the Conference, are accepted into Full Connexion with the Conference. Conference authorises the Presiding Bishop and other presbyters to conduct the ordination by the imposition of hands and the prayer of invocation to the Holy Spirit. Ordination sets the presbyter aside to the full-time ministry of the Word and Sacraments with ordination being "the act by which Christians are authorised by the Church to act in its name and on its behalf in certain ways" (MCSA 2016a:20).

I have argued that the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination in the MCSA have undergone significant challenges and adaptations in order to be relevant in the southern African context. These have been a continuous process over an extended period of time in order to adapt from a colonial missionary context to an established denomination on the African continent. The adaptations are not only geographical, to suit the different African context, but also historical, to keep up with universal social trends, such as the emancipation of women, acceptance of same-sex relationships, and generally more democratic practices, in the interests of greater justice and equality.

I have also argued that there have been significant amendments to the essential elements of the doctrine of ordination as well as to the accompanying practices associated with ordination. The inclusion of women as presbyters and the introduction of the annual Presbyters' Convocation are significant amendments to the doctrine of ordination. The practices associated with ordination have also been extensively modified. These include the change from a reluctance to ordain indigenous persons to ordaining African preachers; from holding racially separated Black and White Ministerial Sessions of Synod to Joint Ministerial Sessions; ordination services no longer being conducted according to ethnicity; accepting

presbyters from other denominations to participate in the laying on of hands at ordination; and the combining of ministerial training and formation to a single institution.

In the mid-1990s the decision was taken to combine the Ministerial and Representative Sessions of Synod and Conference into a unitary session of each, resulting in presbyteral matters no longer being the preserve of the Ministerial Sessions at Synod or Conference. This decision, however, was amended in 2017 with the introduction of the Presbyters' Convocation in 2018 which precedes the open Synod Session and reports its findings to the Synod. The Convocation deals with matters pertaining to the vocation of the clergy, engagement with contemporary theological/doctrinal/ethical issues, disciplinary matters, the oral examination of ordinands and the reaffirmation by all presbyters of their ordination vows and undertakings made when they candidated and were ordained (MCSA 2018a:93).

The boundaries of ethnicity have been crossed by acknowledging the capabilities of black presbyters with their appointments into leadership positions at circuit, district/synod and Connexional level. Rev Seth Mokitimi was elected President of the Conference in 1964, followed 10 years later by Rev Jotham Mvusi and, significantly, black presbyters have been serving as the Presidents of Conference/Presiding Bishops from 1987 to the present. The boundaries were also crossed with the introduction of cross-cultural formation, training and stationing of probationer ministers with the 3-Phase formation programme.

Specific amendments relating to the ecclesiology and the incorporation of the ministry of the laity and their relationship with the presbyteral ministry have been introduced. The Journey to the New Land Convocation in 1993 was a significant step in the transformation of the church from the perspective of the laity. The Convocation introduced more participatory, consultative and inclusive processes, re-emphasised the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers "to value and enhance the gifts and ministry of all God's people women and men, laity and clergy, young and old" (MCSA 1993:374) and introduced the office of a Lay President of Conference "to give recognition to the importance of the laity" (MCSA 1995:310). The Convocation also led to the transformation of the separate clergy and lay sessions of Synod and Conference to a combined session of each where laity could participate in decision-making relating to the training and ordination of the clergy.

A comparison of the liturgy of the 2018 Ordination Service of the MCSA (MCSA 2018d:1-11) with that of the Methodist Church in Great Britain[93] highlights that the doctrines and practices recorded in the ordination liturgy of the MCSA still remain consistent with and closely aligned to those of the Methodist Church in Great Britain.

The inclusion of some elements into the liturgy has introduced an African flavour to the service. The liturgical changes include that hymns and Bible readings are multi-lingual, provision is made for the songs in the vernacular, the candle representing the light of Christ is lit and the congregation participates in the sharing of the peace with one another. Other additions are the inclusion of the liturgy relating to the recognition of common ministry and reaffirmation of baptism, declaring that "Ministry is the work of God, done by the people of God. Through baptism all Christians are made part of the priesthood of all believers, the church, Christ's body, made visible in the world" (MCSA 2018d:2) and the commitment to this shared ministry with the Lay President participating in the ordination service but not in the laying on of hands.

In spite of the call for Africanisation in the MCSA and the Conference of 1990 calling for "regional working groups to make suggestions for the incorporation of indigenous symbolism which will enhance the meaning and impact of ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Church of Christ…" (MCSA 1990:344), the service remains very British and colonial.

In assessing the amendments over the centuries, and particularly the implications of the five areas where our colonial past continues to influence our ecclesiology, doctrine and practices, certain conclusions can be drawn. The first is that there are elements in the present doctrine and practices that are not un-African and are represented in our present statements and practices. These would include aspects of African culture and spirituality with concepts such as inclusivity, *ubuntu*[94], human relationships and the place and role of the community, all of which will be developed more fully in section 4.3. However, in spite of the amendments adopted by the Conference, the essential elements to the doctrine of ordination remain closely aligned with the colonial theology adopted from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England in 1882 and show a greater affinity to the colonial past than to our southern African

[93] Comparisons were made with The Sunday Service of the Methodists, with other occasional services (Wesley 1788:285-296), the Book of Offices (Methodist Church 1936:134-154), the 1999 Methodist Worship Book (Methodist Church 1999:298-312) and the Ordination Service 2017 of the British Conference (Methodist Church 2017:1-22).

[94] While *ubuntu* is distinctly African, the notion of communality is universal; hence there are aspects of *ubuntu* in the doctrine of ordination, because it is in our common humanity.

epistemology. We remain very English in our theology of ordination. While ordination is now, theoretically, free of ethnic and gender exclusivity, white domination, patriarchy and inclusive of the complementary role and ministry of the laity, there is a blurring of the lines between doctrine and practices and between intention and practices.

We have remained colonial in practice by not stationing presbyters cross-culturally or white presbyters in rural and poorer circuits. Our stationing practice of an itinerant ministry is colonial and applicable in the times of Rev Wesley but is for southern Africans reminiscent of the migrant labour system of the past leading to the separation of spouses from their partners. Women presbyters continue to plead for justice, recognition and a rightful place in the leadership of the church. The clergy continues to dominate the laity and enjoy a superior status. Patriarchy continues to be experienced. Discrimination is experienced by presbyters in a same-sex relationship by being barred from entering into a Civil Union or from blessing such unions of other couples. Our institutional culture remains Eurocentric in the manner in which we conduct the business in the Conference and the official meetings of the church. The dress of presbyters continues to be influenced by European styles and colonial regulations. The significance of the role of ceremonies and the laying on of hands in African culture is not sufficiently incorporated into our present theology and practices. The authority of Conference has been entrenched and the relationship which presbyters enter into with the Conference is now termed a “covenantal” relationship and not a “contractual” one.

The conclusions to be drawn are that not only was the MCSA very English in the past, but that it remains very English in its doctrine and practices of ordination. The literature reviewed clearly indicates that the MCSA has not adequately adapted either the doctrine or the practices of ordination from our colonial past and that insufficient ingredients grown in African soil are being placed into the African cooking pot. In addition, the African ingredients in the pot, drawn from African culture and traditions, include and reinforce ‘old’ attitudes and practices associated with colonialism, such as patriarchy and upholding elitism and the hierarchical structures of the church. Not all African ingredients are, therefore, suitable for incorporation into the Africanised model.

Drawing on these conclusions, the following chapter will be examining the calls for the decolonisation and Africanisation of the doctrine and practices of ordination in order that the MCSA become “an authentic African Church” (MCSA 1994:376). The central features of

decolonisation, the contributions which African culture has to offer and how the doctrine and practices need to be applied differently within the MCSA will be examined.

Chapter 4

The calls for decolonisation and Africanisation in the MCSA

Introduction

The examination of the impact of the colonial ecclesiology indicates that the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA remain very colonial and that the adaptations which have been adopted are not sufficiently contextualised for our Southern African context. The MCSA remains very English in its doctrine and practices as the ingredients being placed into the African cooking pot continue to be harvested from colonial stock.

The procedure to be followed in this chapter is to determine the essential features of decolonisation and to understand the call from within the MCSA for the decolonisation and Africanisation of the doctrine and practices of ordination. Thereafter, those aspects of our southern African culture and African theology which will be helpful in decolonising and Africanising the doctrine in the MCSA will be evaluated. This analysis will assist in amending the way the doctrine and practices of ordination are to be applied in order to be incorporated into an Africanised model of ordination. The formation of presbyters and possible unintended consequences in the adoption of an Africanised model will also be presented.

Although the study is centred on the doctrine of ordination, we need to listen to the varying voices for an end to the general colonial influence and its continuing narrative. By doing so, aspects related to the doctrine of ordination will become apparent and will contribute towards the formulation of proposals to be considered in the final chapters. A discussion on a decolonised doctrine of ordination will be followed by the implications of a revised ecclesiology for the doctrine and practices of ordination in our African context.

4.1 Decolonisation and Africanisation

As the research topic is the decolonisation and Africanisation of ordination in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, fundamental questions need to be asked about decolonisation and Africanisation and how they relate to the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA. The study needs to include questions such as: What is decolonisation? Do the ecclesiology and the doctrine of ordination need to be decolonised? What is the relationship between decolonisation and Africanisation? Which aspects of southern African culture and African theology could be included in the Africanisation of the doctrine? What are the possible pitfalls in adopting an African epistemology?

It is important to understand that decolonisation is not a single theoretical school of thought, but multi-faceted and diverse, with a common agenda of dealing with the impact of colonialism on the lives and thinking of people in Africa. African authors have highlighted numerous aspects of African life contaminated by colonialism and requiring both decolonisation and Africanisation. The premise of authors is that colonialism affects people at many levels requiring that they be liberated physically as well as in their manner of thinking, knowing and doing. Lephakga (2015:145-163) asserts that the conquering of the "Being" of the African people was at the heart of colonialism. He concludes that "[t]his made them a conquered people and empty shells that accepted everything coming their way" (Lephakga 2015:146). In support, Ng'weshemi (2002) posits the view that: "As two sides of the same coin, colonialism and racism have evolved out of a superiority complex of the West. Racism is a belief in the superiority of a particular race and in the idea that human abilities are determined by race. Colonialism is one manifestation of the assertion that the strong dominates the weak" (Ng'weshemi 2002:49). An added element is that colonialism entrenches and centralises power in structures.

In response, the literature reflects the calls for the colonial vestiges of power, race, economic domination, structures, a Western epistemology and knowledge system, a Euro-American worldview as well that African customs and religious practices to be de-constructed and re-evaluated from an African perspective. There is no need for an African epistemology to imitate our European heritage or to think that a European epistemology is the only worthy one. Colonisation changed "the way people come to think about, articulate and experience the world in which they live, or have come to live. It starts to forge a new collective memory, a new mentality, such that it becomes difficult and strange to think outside of the box, outside of the categories that have been handed down and taught as normative" (Ward 2017:5).

In addition, the Being of African people is to be reconstructed, dealing with the vestiges of self-hate and a sense of inferiority (Grosfoguel 2007:211-223).[95] The necessity for an African epistemology that is relevant, grounded and affirmed in the experiences and being of African people on African soil is well presented by the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC 2013:1-55) in their statement: "The fierce struggle we have to wage and win before we can claim to be free is to discover the African mirror through which we can see ourselves and not use the ones given to us by our colonizers when they were in the land grabbing business" (BMC 2013:31-32).

An observation from Mbembe (2016:29-45) is that "Colonialism rhymes with monolingualism" (Mbembe 2016:36) while other authors recall that there was nothing particularly democratic about colonialism. Mbiti (1969) affirms that "mission Christianity has not penetrated sufficiently deep into African religiosity" (Mbiti 1969:233) and has "come to mean for many Africans simply a set of rules to be observed, promises to be expected in the next world, rhythmless hymns to be sung, rituals to be followed and a few other outward things" (1969:233).

Other significant contributions to the call for decolonisation in theological thinking were the influences of Black Consciousness philosophy and Black Theology of liberation. Mtshiselwa (2015b:1-9) describes Black Consciousness philosophy as insisting "on the redress of the oppression of Africa-South Africans, based on race" (Mtshiselwa 2015b:2). This philosophy refutes the negation of blackness and the affirmation of whiteness. It equally demands the infusion of black South Africans with pride and dignity, "authenticating black people as human beings, humanly contained and entailed in their blackness and is the deliberate act of the creation of black people as black by God" (Mdingi 2014:22). Furthermore, while the Black Consciousness philosophy identifies the manner in which white people practised oppression in apartheid South Africa, it also critiques the complicity of black South Africans in their suppression (Mtshiselwa 2015b:2-3).

Black Consciousness philosophy, in turn, influenced the rise of Black Theology of liberation[96] in South Africa, as espoused by persons such as Biko (1978:27-32), Mosala

[95] See also Denis 2007:57-69; Maldonado-Torres 2007:240-27; Mtshiselwa 2015b:1-9 and Snyman 2015:266-291.

[96] Mgojo (1977:25-32), a Methodist theologian, defines Black Theology as "an attempt by black Christians to grasp and think through the central claims of the Christian faith in the light of black experience" (Mgojo 1977:28).

(1986:175-199), Pityana (1994:173-183) and Gqubule (1974:16-23) who describes the intention of Black Theology as "concerned primarily with a search for:

1. Relevance,
2. Liberation,
3. A new understanding of the Incarnation,
4. A re-emphasis on the Christian doctrine of man" (Gqubule 1974:20).

Black theology arose "because black people have expereinced alienation within the church. Both what the church teaches and the sources for that teaching are unrelated to the thought-forms, values, history and experience of black people" (Pityana 1994:179). Urbaniak (2017:1-25) draws our attention to the fact that "Black theology, emerges, first, spontaneously, as Black people's theology on the ground, and then intentionally, through the prophetic language of theology, be it in a pastoral or an academic setting" (Urbaniak 2017:19). Klaaren (1997:370-382) highlights that "Black theology has retold the story of the Exodus as the liberation and formation of a new people… with a liberating theology of creation" (Klaaren 1997:371, 377).[97] Setiloane (1986), in turn, places before us that "what African Theology objects to in Western Theology is the accretion of Western Civilisation and Culture which have come to be considered as inseparably part and parcel of Christianity" (Setiloane 1986:34).

Although Setiloane (1986) argues that African Theology and Black Theology are "'stablemates', each with its peculiar contribution to the Struggle" (Setiloane 1986:43), Tshaka (2014:1-7) differs, declaring that: "Our preference to speak of an African theology and not Black theology is informed by our assumption that the notion of Black theology in South Africa does not significantly capture the notion of African culture and worldviews" (Tshaka 2014:1). Ng'weshemi (2002) expands on the role of African theology stating: "In other words, African theology arose in response to the anthropological poverty, the plight Africa has suffered under foreign domination…. The concern of African theology is liberation from both cultural and socio-economic oppression. It is a correction and redressing of anthropological poverty" (Ng'weshemi 2002:82, 83). Arising from their oppression and domination, the response of Black/African theology was to ensure that the African world view and their life experiences informed their theological methodology and praxis.

[97] See also Gathogo 2007:327-334; Mosala 1988:3-5 and Ng'weshemi 2002:88-92.

The combination of Black Consciousness philosophy and Black Theology of liberation affirmed being black, being freed from oppression and reclaiming what was taken by the colonisers. Mtshiselwa (2016:1-19) clarifies the concepts stating that: “The philosophy of black consciousness insists on redressing the effects of the oppression of black people in South Africa, which is based on race, while the black liberation theology calls for the liberation of the oppressed people” (Mtshiselwa 2016:3). African theology, together with Black theology and Black Consciousness philosophy, has provided the platform from which African people could be liberated from their colonial past and rediscover what it means to be African.

The influences of Black Consciousness and Black Theology took root amongst Methodist presbyters, particularly those in academia at the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (Fedsem), who then influenced the thinking of the probationer ministers under training. Fedsem was initially situated in close proximity to the University of Fort Hare in the town of Alice and then moved to Imbali, Pietermaritzburg, when “the Council of Fedsem was issued with an expropriation order declaring that the seminary property was required for the expansion of the University of Fort Hare” (Richardson 2007:140).

Richardson (2007:131-152) recalls that “Fedsem was the birthplace of Black Consciousness and Black Theology in Southern Africa” (Richardson 2007:140). His views are supported by de Gruchy (1997:155-172) who states that “Black Consciousness and Black theology had considerable impact on the life of the English-speaking churches as a whole. Younger black ministers, many of them trained at the FEDSEM, where Black theology was particularly influential, asserted increasing pressure on the churches” (De Gruchy 1997:164). Mtshiselwa (2015b:1-9) goes even further, indicating that “the Black Consciousness philosophy and the black theology of liberation had a significant influence on the formation of the BMC” (Mtshiselwa 2015b:3). The influence of these schools of thought will be discussed in section 4.2 of this chapter.

Other significant contributions to the cry for decolonisation were the voices of feminist theologians challenging the patriarchal cultural attitudes that prevailed, demanding gender equality in the MCSA and reinterpreting the texts on which their exclusion was based.[98] Cochrane (1991:21-36) describes feminist theology as advocating:

> a wholeness of vision in which all power and domination relations are challenged so that all human persons may become partners and equals in the common task. The liberation of women can only take place in the context of a universal liberation process from all exploitative structures…. The aim is the transformation of the social order towards a just society *free from any kind of domination* (1991:35).[99]

Bernadette Mosala (1986:129-133) argues that, in her experience, women have been tardy in their quest for liberation from patriarchal theology, a quest which demands that "[w]omen must dismantle clericalism, which is an understanding of leadership as rule that reduces others to subjects to be governed" (Mosala 1986:132). Her desire was realised when Itumeleng Mosala (1988:3-9) stated that "the question of the Black Feminist Theology of Liberation has emerged as a high priority on the agenda of Black Theology" (Mosala 1988:4) following the holding of a feminist conference in 1984 at Hammanskraal (Maluleke 2007:422).

Mkhwanazi and Kgatla (2015:180-197) maintain that "Anthropological literature points out that almost all ethnic groups in Africa are patriarchal in structure (institutions of male rule and privilege), with relatively few exceptions" (Mkhwanazi & Kgatla 2015:182). Patriarchy, together with "African culture's deprecating view of women and biblical texts that support such stereotypes" (2015:181), have resulted in ordained women presbyters in the MCSA not achieving their full potential, not being invited to serve in circuits and being "stationed in rural circuits where they cannot cope with challenges such as African traditional stereotypes against women in ordained Ministry" (2015:182). Marumo (2016:55-70) avers that "[w]omen in ministry were allowed into ministry with the baggage of tribalism that considered women subordinate to men and to be treated as such. It is a notion that has never been eradicated" (Marumo 2016:58). Mudimeli (2011) declares that "… the Bible is full of life-giving news for women, but the focus on texts of oppression and the patriarchal interpretation of the Bible have been used to the disadvantage of women" (Mudimeli 2011:3).

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[98] Authors include Lebaka-Ketshabile 2016:1-7, Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) 2012:205-216, Mkhwanazi (2014), Mudimeli (2011) and Whitby 2016:1-10.

[99] A similar undertaking is that of Mercy Amba Oduyoye and the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians whose goal is the liberation of women in the church and in society (Oduyoye 2001).

It must not be forgotten that there is a difference in emphasis between Western feminism and African feminism. Rev Malinga (2018) explains the difference stating that in Western feminism, "the rights and the equality of genders and the rights of women to make choices and decisions on their own" (Malinga 2018) are prominent. As a consequence of the circumstances in which African women find themselves, "African feminism takes into consideration issues of race and issues of economy. They do so because those are the experiences of African women" (Malinga 2018). However, each is influenced by the other and their combined emphases are discerned in the appeals and resolutions to the Conference for an end to paternalism and discrimination and the consequences for women of being stationed in rural areas and not receiving their monthly stipend.

West (2015: 21-31) draws our attention to the varied responses by feminist theologians incorporating both the African context in their understanding of the biblical text in order to deal with gender and patriarchal epistemologies (West 2015:26). Authors such as Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) (2012:205-216), Mtshiselwa and Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) (2016:1-8) and Mudimeli (2011) are re-interpreting oppressive texts from the Scriptures "entrenched by, among others, pronounced patriarchies, female voicelessness, dangerous masculinities and violent biblical hermeneutics" (Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele):2012:205). These authors use a gender-sensitive, a *bosadi* (womanhood) approach, described by Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) (2012:205-216) as:

> In the traditional patriarchal sense of the word, "*bosadi*" describes what it means to be a woman in the African-South African (Northern Sotho) culture.
>
> In the context of biblical studies, a bosadi approach examines what ideal/liberative womanhood should be for an African-South African woman bible reader. The approach aims at challenging disempowering notions of womanhood as embedded in African cultures. The approach includes the following elements:
>
> (a) a critique of the oppressive elements of African culture evident in women's lives, while reviving aspects that uplift the status of women;
>
> (b) a critique of the oppressive elements of the Christian bible, while highlighting the liberative elements — although the bible is a product of patriarchal cultures, it does contain liberative elements, if read from a gender perspective… (2012:206).

Using the *bosadi* approach, Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) (2014:489-501), re-interprets Psalm 8 to reveal "the equality and royalty of all human beings irrespective of their gender, among others" (Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele):2014:489) and that "both male and female has [sic] been endowed with the capacity to rule" (2014:499). Mudimeli (2011:61-92), using

a *vhusadzi* (womanhood)[100] approach, analyses problematic texts from both Old and New Testament texts capturing the liberating "voices of women's theologies approaching women's issues from women's perspectives" (Mudimeli 2011:61) as opposed to the dominant patriarchal interpretations of the church and from within African culture, and asserts that: "In addition, [Scripture] challenges sexist and racist structures with a view to the affirmation of the well-being of African South African women" (2011:134).

The clarion call of African Theology, Black Consciousness philosophy, Black Theology of liberation and feminist theologians is for the decolonisation and Africanisation of South African society as well as the Christian Church, including the MCSA. How those calls were raised in the MCSA will now be described in order to discern how to adapt the doctrine of ordination to our African continent in a way that is effective.

4.2 Influences impacting decolonisation and Africanisation in the MCSA

More specific than the broader call for vestiges of colonisation to be removed within the MCSA has been the appeal for the Africanisation of the church, remembering that decolonisation is not the same as Africanisation. However, they are two sides of the same coin. The decolonisation of the MCSA and the stripping of the systemic issues arising from colonialism must extend to the Africanisation of the MCSA. This shift must include the adoption and inculcation of an African epistemology to inform the very being and practices of the church and impact permeate the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination.

While acknowledging that "there are many definitions of *Africanisation*" (Naidoo 2016:3), Hlabangane (2018) defines Afrikanisation[101] as making:

> a deliberate and concerted effort to embrace Afrikan philosophies of life and of being in relationship. These are found in our languages, our ways of expressing ourselves, how we relate to each other and how we understand life and, importantly, a good life to be…. By centering knowledges from Afrika, we buy space to breathe as we think from Afrika which we believe offers rich and deep philosophies that can give us tools of how to relate

[100] Mudimeli (2011:133-134) explains that the *vhusadzi* approach, known as such in Tshivenda, is known as the *bosadi* approach in Northern Sotho.

[101] Where the concept of Africanisation is referred to with the spelling 'Afrikanisation', derived from the word 'Alkebulan', this spelling will be used. The Kemetic History of Afrika (n.d.) draws our attention to the ancient name of Africa being Alkebulan, stating, "Among the many names Alkebu-lan ['mother of mankind' or 'garden of eden'] was called are the following: Ethiopia, Corphye, Ortegia, Libya and Africa - the latest of all. Alkebulan is the oldest and the only one of indigenous origin. It was used by the Moors, Nubians, Numidians, Khart-Haddans (Carthagenians), and Ethiopians. Africa, the current misnomer adopted by almost everyone today, was given to this continent by the ancient Greeks and Romans" (http://kemetichistoryofafrikabluelotus.blogspot.com/2010/03/alkebu-lan-land-of-blacks.html)).

> to other human beings, the animal and plant species and the spiritual world. It is important to re-think these relationships to undo the legacy of colonialism that damaged them (Hlabangane 2018).

The goal of the decolonisation of ordination in the MCSA is more than removing the vestiges of colonialism: it is the beginning of a new struggle of being relevant on the African continent by "making a deliberate and concerted effort to move away from colonial ways of knowledge imposed by colonisers that have meant that we have to turn away from Afrikan ways of knowing" (Hlabangane 2018). Decolonisation is the process of de-linking from the colonial paradigm and re-linking with our African culture, heritage, knowledge sources and religion, hence the statement that decolonisation must lead to Africanisation. It is important that this process "takes into account the religious sensibility and disposition of the people…that goes beyond merely translating the Christian message into local idioms. It also goes beyond a selective application of this message using an equally selective list of items from the local culture" (Orobator 2015:6, 7). A significant warning, though, is that "Africanisation is not necessarily neat and benign" (Maluleke 2010:370).

The Methodist Conference of 1992 developed a definition of Africanisation which is useful in this study, namely: "Africanisation is a discipline of study and application concerned with the perception and understanding of the Christian gospel, in terms of concepts, symbols, practices and ethos of the African peoples, in relation to the functioning of the Church in worship, teaching, preaching, sharing the gifts, building the body, evangelism and Christ in the world" (MCSA 1992:289).

As 1994 can be cited as a seminal year in the transformation of the South African nation, a significant question to consider is whether the MCSA can speak of a similarly defining moment when the processes of decolonisation and Africanisation were set firmly in motion.

The year 1958 is significant, with the Conference that year taking the bold decision to remain unified in the midst of the pressures of the apartheid policies to separate into black and white constituencies. The Conference, meeting in a time of political upheaval and discrimination in South Africa and applying Wesley's teaching on Christian perfection to the South African context,[102] declared the Methodist Church of South Africa to be "one and undivided" (MethSA 1958:202).

[102] For a detailed description of the relationship between the 1958 Conference statement and Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection see Forster 2008:418-421.

The relevant portion of the 1958 Conference statement reads:

> The Conference, in prayer and heart-searching, expressed its conviction that it is the will of God for the Methodist Church that it should be one and undivided, trusting to the leading of God to bring this ideal to ultimate fruition. We believe God is calling us to an increasing implementation of this policy in our Connexional, District, and local life and work, for to be a Christian Church means to be a fellowship in which differences of race and language are transcended by our brotherhood in Christ (MethSA 1958:202).

The implications of the 1958 declaration for the ecclesiology of the MCSA were that black and white members enjoyed equal standing within the Methodist Church of South Africa, that no distinction was to be drawn between the standing and status of ordained black and white clergy persons or between black and white members and firmly set the denomination on the road to decolonisation and Africanisation. But more significantly, the decision epitomised the resolve of black clergy not to break away and form a parallel black Methodist Church as is indicated in the words of Rev Mogoba, quoted by Storey (2014:75-88), who declared: "I am not leaving the MCSA. It does not belong to the whites. It is the church of my ancestors. Whites can leave if they like, but I will not" (Storey 2014:83).

The 1958 decision by the church, which took place at a time of extreme political and social conflict, is in contrast to what happened under similar circumstances in the Methodist denomination in America with the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) that "was born, through adversity, of the Methodist church and to this day does not differ in any major way from what all Methodists believe. The split from the main branch of the Methodist Church was not a result of doctrinal differences but rather the result of a time period that was marked by man's intolerance of his fellow man, based on the color of his skin. It was a time of slavery, oppression and the dehumanization of people of African descent" (AME n.d.). Significantly, the inclusion of the word "African" in their title accentuates the fact that "the church was organized by people of African descent and heritage. It does not mean that the church was founded in Africa, or that it was for persons of African descent only" (AME n.d.). While being established in America, the AME also ministers in our southern African context and enjoys a filial relationship with the MCSA.

The process of transformation and not separation by the Methodist denomination on southern African soil gained impetus through the influence of the BMC from within the MCSA. The lasting legacy of colonialism, the political environment prevalent in South Africa and the influences of Black Consciousness philosophy, Black Theology of liberation and a desire to foster an African culture within a predominantly black church provided the essential

ingredients for the establishment of the BMC. In May 1975, the Rev Baartman, who had received his theological training at Fedsem, invited a number of black Methodist ministers to a consultation at St John's Methodist Church in Bloemfontein to "reflect on the ministry of the church from a Black perspective and, more particularly, to assess the role and contribution of Black people in the leadership structures of the church" (Balia 1991:88).[103] Their concerns were that the decision-making processes in the MCSA were in the hands of predominantly white clergy in a church which professed itself one and undivided, that black presbyters and laity were experiencing racism and were being marginalised and that a Eurocentric epistemology dominated the thinking of the church (Theilen 2003:28). In effect, "the church was a mirror image of the apartheid society in which it laboured" (Mancotywa 2016:9).

The BMC sought to address the negative mental state of the oppressed black persons, develop black thinking and black leadership in the decision-making courts of the church as well as insisting on changes to the structures which perpetuate black subordination and ethnicity in the stationing of ministers (Balia 1991:87-92).[104] Their great concern was that "despite blacks constituting the majority in the church they had no voice in the church" (Madise 1999:61) with only two of the twelve District Synods being chaired by black ministers in 1975 and that competent black presbyters were not being appointed as superintendent ministers. The centralisation of power in the structures of the church and the absolute powers of the superintendent minister, District Meetings and the Conference led to the BMC demanding that "the resolutions and the programmes taken at the decision making levels of the MCSA have an input of Black Methodists from an African Context" (BMC 2015:2). The BMC also raised their concern that ethnicity was a major factor in the stationing of ministers and that "the church which prophesied [sic] to be a Christian, one and undivided church was continuously treating black ministers in a degrading fashion" (BMC 2015:4).[105]

Membership of the BMC was initially restricted to black presbyters, then broadened in 1978 to include "invited lay decision makers such as circuit stewards, synod and conference members" (2015:4) and then opened to all black persons in the early 1980s.

At the heart of the cry of the BMC was that European epistemology, white supremacy and discriminatory practices must be replaced by an African epistemology, incorporate African

[103] See also Forster 2008:421-422 and Theilen 2003:28 who also argue that the intention of the BMC was to introduce black decision-makers into the structures of the church.
[104] See also Mtshiselwa 2015b:1-9 and Pritchard 2014:286.
[105] See also Balia 1991:41-42.

customs and African leadership. The BMC insisted that "we need to have a sound understanding and interpretation of our theology that we are Black people created in the image of God" (BMC 2013:28) and "not to be misguided by the ever apparent perception that white is better than black" (2013:28). In addition, the BMC wished to ensure that the church's theological praxis and theological training no longer be based on Western theological models but be contextualised in our African situation (2013:32) and that "Black leadership must help itself to develop leadership skills in line with current times and issues" (2013:34).

A closer inspection of the BMC's *Product/Service Information Brochure* of 2015 (BMC 2015:1-6) reveals the numerous efforts being undertaken by the BMC to counter the continuing effects of the colonial heritage. The document states that "The BMC exists for the Transformation of the MCSA into a truly African Church (in character, doctrine, ethos, identity and practice) by challenging and equipping Black Methodists to contribute meaningfully, actively and intelligently in the MCSA given the context of Africans" (BMC 2015:2). The "Specific Objectives" of the BMC are recorded as:

- Enables Black Methodist to be active agents of change and transformation, leading successfully across all structures of the MCSA and society;
- Ensures that the resolutions and the programmes taken at the decision making levels of the MCSA have an input of Black Methodists from an African Context;
- Strengthen and develops Societies and Circuits to be models of effective and efficient Churches where black people live and work [creating pockets of excellence with high accountability for performance];
- Empower and capacitate through skilling and education of Black Methodists in the MCSA [creating a knowledge society, a power house];
- Encourage and promote unity amongst the Blacks cross cutting ethnic groups, racial lines, as well as amongst Blacks and Whites (BMC 2015:2).

The success of the BMC in bringing about change is affirmed by numerous authors. The evaluation of Grassow (2015:1-3) is that: "It must be acknowledged that the BMC has succeeded spectacularly in transforming the MCSA from a white led church to a black led church" (Grassow 2015:1). Forster (2008:411-434) concurs, placing their efforts in the larger context of decolonising the ecclesiology of the MCSA, stating:

> What the BMC has done for Methodism in Southern Africa is truly significant. First, they have engaged in the process of bringing the church to more adequately represent and reflect the voices of black South Africans…. Second, they have helped to re-appropriate the values, traditions and religion of Africa in the Methodist Church…The BMC has significantly helped the MCSA to reinvent itself as an African Christian denomination through education, publication, and the presentation of the value and necessity of black and African theologies. Third, the BMC has ensured that politics

> (often viewed by conservative Christians as the ambit of the state) are dealt with as part of the official agenda of the church (Forster 2008:422).[106]

The appeals and pressure exerted by the BMC contributed towards the appointment of black presbyters as superintendent ministers and bishops, leading to their appointment as Presiding Bishop, General Secretary, convenors of committees and Directors of Units; the President and Dean of Chapel at the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary and the Chairperson of the Doctrine, Ethics and Worship Committee of the MCSA. Their efforts contributed to the breaking down of discrimination in the stationing of ministers on the grounds of race and gender, and their desire for a single venue for the training of ministers supported the decision of the 1972 Conference that "multiracial theological training should be further investigated" (Dimension 1972b:5).

The BMC has been instrumental in equipping and empowering black clergy as competent thinkers and effective practitioners in order to be effective change-agents in both the church and society. As Mtshiselwa observes: "Through research and education, the BMC made a contribution towards the development of black South African ministers in the MCSA" (Mtshiselwa 2015b:4). In addition to the holding of seminars (2015b:4), the BMC makes bursaries available for postgraduate studies to black ordained presbyters whose progress is monitored by the Bursary Committee who report to the annual consultation of the organisation (BMC 2013:14-15).

The opinion of Bailie (2009) needs to be recorded: "The formation of the BMC highlights the entrenched frustration and desperation among Liberationist Methodists who strived for an intervention…within the MCSA to find a common identity. In other words, had not the BMC been birthed, it is possible that a schism may have, at that time, been inevitable" (Bailie 2009:70, 71).

The following phase in the decolonisation processes was the intensification of the call in the 1990s for the MCSA to use an African epistemology to reflect its existence, ministry and mission on the African continent, and in order to become an authentic African Church. The annual Conferences responded to the demands for change with the Conference of 1992 dealing extensively with the subject of Africanisation. This Conference provided a definition of Africanisation as well as specifying those areas requiring transformation in paragraph 28.3.7.1 of the *Minutes* (MCSA 1992), namely that:

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[106] See also Balia 1991: 87-92; Kumalo 2009:31, 42-43; Madise 1999:63.

> Africanisation is a discipline of study and application concerned with the perception and understanding of the Christian gospel, in terms of concepts, symbols, practices and ethos of the African peoples, in relation to the function of the Church in worship, teaching, preaching, sharing of gifts, building the body, evangelism and Christ in the world (MCSA 1992:289-290).

Following the Journey to the New Land Convocation in 1993, the Conference of 1994 went further and referred to the Transformation Committee[107] the following resolution, as recorded in the *Minutes* (MCSA 1994), for their attention:

> Black people have for centuries been effectively excluded from decision-making processes and from the major institutions and departments that regulate their lives.
>
> In the spirit of the Journey to the New Land and in order to promote the development of an authentic African Church,
>
> 1. Conference commits itself to ensure that a dominant culture does not determine the life of the Church and inhibit the self-worth and self-expression of its members;
>
> 2. Conference further commits itself to develop new models of ministry which will facilitate the emergence of an authentic African heritage and spirituality;
>
> 3. In pursuing the Journey, Conference will strive to develop processes which enjoy legitimacy, win the support of all our people and serve to empower Black Circuits (1994:376-377).

The calls for transformation received the attention of the Presiding Bishop, Rev Ivan Abrahams, who, in his address to the Connexional Executive of 2006 (Abrahams 2007:5-12), asked "What it means to be a Church in 21st century Africa" and responded by saying:

> …let me once more return to what it means to be an authentically African Church in the 21st century. Many of the proposals are not new at all. I unfortunately beat an old drum:
>
> We need to embrace indigenous leadership, management styles and approaches that recover the ethics and values embedded in African philosophy;
>
> We need to be clear about our identity. Our institutional culture is still predominantly male and Euro-centric;
>
> Mercy Oduyoye, warns that African women's voices must be clearly heard in the formation of theology, decisions and operations of the church at every level;
>
> I once more make the salutary call for our theology to be homebrewed, cooked in African pots and not be afraid to address issues like initiation in the Eastern Cape that has led to the death of 24 young boys this season and left many mutilated or ritual killings in the Northern Province where human body parts are used for muti;[108]

[107] The Transformation Committee was established to ensure that the proposals from the Convocation were implemented at Connexional, District, Circuit and Society levels, together with whatever changes in church polity would be required (MCSA 1994:375-376).

[108] According to Wikipedia (n.d.), "African traditional medicine makes use of various natural products, many derived from trees and other plants. Botanical medicine prescribed by an inyanga or herbal healer is generally known as 'muti', but the term can apply to other traditional medical formulations, including those that are zoological or mineral in composition" (www.muti).

> Our current stationing process is anti-transformational and needs radical overhauling. I will no longer be complicit in maintaining a system where race, gender, language and tribal identity take precedence over gifts, talents and skills in the placement of our ministers;
>
> During the years of struggle against apartheid rule we often said that which unites us as a people is greater than that which divides us. Now is the time to celebrate plurality and diversity, to respect norms, customs, values, folklore and the complementary gifts which God has bestowed upon us. Our cultural diversity is the hope of our church. We are not a homogenous church;
>
> We can benefit from an African Wesleyan Spirituality where there is no dualism between the sacred and the secular, a spirituality that is not captive to individualism and celebrates shared values, human rights and offers vision, direction and purpose for daily living (Abrahams 2007:7).

Abrahams (2007) has succinctly encapsulated the central calls within the MCSA for the decolonisation and Africanisation of our ecclesiology in order to become an authentic African Church as described in Chapter 3, sections 3.1-3.5. These include that:

- African persons serve in leadership at all levels of the church;
- our institutional culture be transformed from being male and Euro-centric to being inclusive of gender and an African epistemology;
- our theology incorporates African thinking, philosophy and epistemology in our formulations, training and praxis in order to move away from a Western management style of governance and of the entrenched power of structures;
- women gain their rightful place in their representation in the structures of the church and in their appointment to circuits;
- race, gender, language and tribal identity no longer inform the stationing of presbyters; and that
- the cultural diversity of beliefs and customs by the people of southern Africa receive the appropriate recognition and incorporation into the life of our church.

Other calls not mentioned by Abrahams, but also identified in Chapter 3, sections 3.1-3.5, include the pleas that the stipends, seminary formation, Ministerial Sessions of Synod and the ordination services of presbyters not be based on racial classification. The impact of the influences of a European epistemology and knowledge formation on theological formation, liturgies, styles of worship and the dress code adopted in the Connexion have been raised as matters needing to be addressed.

In addition to these calls was the call by Methodist theologians, circa early 2000, for the Africanisation of ministerial training. Richardson (2007:131-152) draws our attention to the

struggles relating to ministerial training and theological education in the anti-apartheid era. Vika (2008:58-69), in emphasising the importance of the Mission Congress held in 2004, draws the implication that:

> The training of our ministers is such an important aspect of our mission. The emphasis on training of ministers for the African context arises from the fact that the majority of our ministers received training that is primarily informed by western models. Now that there are attempts to Africanise the church it is important that ministers should be familiar with African context in which they are expected to minister (2008:67).

Bailie (2009) is clear that "part of the MCSA's struggle today lies in the formation of an authentically Southern African Methodist theology… [where] a way forward may be to return to the development of a trained ordained ministry in Wesleyan heritage as well as the incorporation of African religious tenets" (Bailie 2009:179, 189). These authors are clear that changes need to take place in the training and formation of ministers for ordination within the new context the MCSA found itself to be ministering.

Significantly, the most vociferous calls in the past decades have been for an end to paternalism and male domination, an end to discrimination on the grounds of gender and an appeal for the rightful place and role of ordained women in the church. A determined appeal is that the male-dominated patriarchal mindset is transformed into a church where equitable stationing appointments and appointments to leadership roles at all levels of the MCSA are available to women presbyters. Lebaka-Ketshabile (2016:1-5) is but one author among many appealing for such a change.[109]

Leading into the 21st century, the debate in the MCSA examined the concepts of blackness and whiteness regarding what it means to be black and what it means to be white in the southern African context and in the MCSA.

In discussing the significance of the word 'black', Mdingi (2014) explains that:

> The term "black" has different meanings. In one sense, it represents the people of African descent and colour, while on the other hand it carries a more symbolic meaning for all those considered less human by a white system and as such to be considered non-whites because whiteness is associated with the meaning of being human…. Since communalism is chief in African cultures, being black means affirming black solidarity (2014:102).

[109] See also Mkhwanazi & Kgatla 2015:180-197, Malinga 2016a:1-15 and Marumo 2016:66-70.

An integral element of this stage of Africanisation in the MCSA was the deconstruction and reconstruction of black identity as a response to colonialism which negatively impacted the self-worth, being, becoming and belonging of the indigenous people. Whereas, "prior to the advent of the colonists in South Africa, black South Africans identified themselves as being 'human'" (Mtshiselwa 2015b:5), the imposition of being classified as 'black' became the basis for colonisation, subjection to white domination and a European epistemology.

The Rev Leleki is incisive when, in his Chairperson's Report to the BMC in 2013 (BMC 2013:31-35), he stated that "[b]eing black is not a matter of pigmentation but being black is [a] reflection of a mental attitude. As black people we must challenge all forces that seek to use our blackness as a stamp that marks us out as subservient beings. Black people should know that they are not appendages to white society and cultures" (BMC 2013:33).

Being black and being African is neither being anti-white, exclusionary of white persons and their culture nor being intimidated or placed under the subjection of a white narrative. As Mtshiselwa comments: "Worthy of note also is the point that the ethos of blackness does not reject whiteness *per se*, but white supremacy which places black people at the periphery" (Mtshiselwa 2016:5). Being black in the MCSA today means the "rediscovery of the agency of Africans" (Maluleke 2000:32), that black presbyters are able to reclaim their personhood, affirm their cultural and African context, contribute knowledge from an African perspective, be set free from being marginalised and thus make a significant contribution to the dominant epistemology in the church.

As a consequence of the reconstruction of blackness in Southern Africa, it is necessary also to re-evaluate whiteness as part of the decolonisation/Africanisation journey in the previously white-dominated church. This process has not received similar attention within the white constituency of the MCSA. The following observation of Storey (2014:75-88) is helpful in understanding this dynamic: "This may reflect an identity crisis among post-1994 whites in general and a feeling of increased marginalisation in a church where the dominant culture has changed" (Storey 2014:84).

While written from a Dutch Reformed Church perspective, but equally valid in the context of the MCSA, van Wyngaard (2014:157-170) warns that unless white Christians "enter into a deeper reflection on their own identity" (Van Wyngaard 2014:158), they will not be able "to develop a theology that can engage with critical issues of "race" in a postapartheid South Africa" (2014:158). The author continues to declare that integral to this reflection on

whiteness is the need for reflection on the "structural evil that produced a society where some benefited at the expense of others" (2014:165).

Having set down the calls, processes and influences relating to decolonisation and Africanisation within the MCSA, I will now turn to a consideration of the contributions a southern African culture would offer the MCSA with a view to furthering the decolonisation and Africanisation project of the ecclesiology, theology and practices of ordination.

4.3 The contributions a southern African culture would offer to the MCSA in terms of its Africanisation project

Various aspects of our African culture and African epistemology which would be helpful in further adapting the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination from our colonial past to our southern African context will now be considered. While many of these aspects are presently represented to a lesser or greater degree, a greater emphasis on each element will greatly enhance the decolonisation and Africanisation of ordination and its practices in the MCSA.

4.3.1 Contributions of an African spirituality

A significant element in the decolonisation and Africanisation of the church is to understand that doing theology from an African perspective is a legitimate exercise and form of theologising by incorporating the lived experience of southern African Christianity and African spirituality. Africa was not without religion and spirituality on the arrival of the missionaries who proceeded to remove aspects of African spirituality, "creating a disconnect between the gospel and African culture" (de Gruchy & Chirongoma 2008:299). An example cited by Bishop Siwa (2018) was that of a shift away from the centrality of family religion in African spirituality:

> where religion is a family religion, where the head at that time acts as the priest of the family and resolves the pastoral needs of the family. The missionaries moved religion from the family away to wherever worship was conducted, and then by a stranger, who tells you that the head of religion in your home is out of order. So disregard what that person is teaching as ours is the right religion. Family religion was now moved to a professional centre" (2018).

The shift of authority in religious things from the family to an institution was foreign to African spirituality but was accepted by the converts, laying the foundation for professional religion away from the home.

As the people of Africa were not without religion and spirituality, Africanisation must not be understood as necessarily rejecting Christianity because of its links with and the influences of colonialism. Rejecting colonialism does not equate to rejecting Christianity: only those aspects of Christianity that were tools of colonialism and hindered the contribution of an African spirituality.

To help understand the contribution African Christianity could make, Maluleke (2010:369-379) provides certain tenets. These include that African Christianity needs to be understood within "the emergence of a truly global Christianity" (Maluleke 2010:375); is to be seen "not as a form of deviation from normality but as an expression of it" (2010:375); is "neither perfect nor [a] better Christianity" (2010:375); and that "African Christianity is about a way of being Christian that takes dialogue and context seriously" (2010:377).

An important tenet for this research is the last thesis of Maluleke (Maluleke 2010:369-379), that of the human influence, and needs to be quoted in full, namely:

> The human is the African in African Christianity. This may sound trite, but Africans are human before they are Africans, just like men are human before they are men. The unique thing about African Christianity is therefore the fact that it is human Christianity. The African in African Christianity is the human. Therefore, there is nothing so essential about being African that justifies considering Africans outside of the human quest. The quest for and the quest of African Christianity is the quest for a more humane and a more human Christianity. The struggle of African Christianity is for a more human and more humane world. It is therefore not helpful to study African Christianity outside of the quest for a better humanity in the service of God (Maluleke 2010:378).

Together with the human influence, a second influence to be considered in African spirituality is the supposition of Richardson (2009:43-56) that holism, vitalism and communality "could be seen as making up the three central facets of 'Africanness'" (Richardson 2009:47) and African spirituality. The contribution of each to this study will now be considered.

Contrary to the Western ideology of a dualism between the sacred and the secular, the spiritual and the physical as well as the individual and the communal, African holism is "seeing things in their totality and not in their separateness" (Richardson 2009:44) or, in the words of Sundkler and Steed (2000), "In Africa religion was more than just religion. It was an all-pervasive reality which served to interpret society and give wholeness to the

individual's life and the community. The village world and the Spirit world were not two distinct separate realms: there was a continuous communication between the two. Religion was a totality, a comprehensive whole" (Sundkler & Steed 2000:91). The African world view "blends the sacred and the mundane. The religious and the moral intermingle with the physical, material, political and social concerns of the people" (Kasenene 1994:142). African holism strives for the holistic well-being and balance of both the individual and the community, together with the dependence and symbiotic relationship of people with one another and with nature. African spirituality offers an opportunity to evaluate theology, including ordination, from a holistic perspective.

Vitalism is inextricably bound up with the well-being of others by means of imparting and transmitting life forces to the community. It is a "dynamic process by which the force of life is transmitted and through which life itself is imparted" (Richardson 2009:46). Setiloane (1986) describes this life force, or "vital forces" in his words, as "*seriti",*[110] "a physical phenomenon which expresses itself externally to the human body in a dynamic manner" (Setiloane 1986:14) and is closely aligned with "the interplay which takes place when people come into contact or live together. The essence of being is 'participation' in which humans are always interlocked with one another" (1986:14). It is *seriti* which brings vitality to the community.

Setiloane (1986) continues to explain that "[t]he interaction of one's 'Seriti' (vital forces) with those of other people in the community does not terminate with death. Even after death 'the vital participation' of the deceased is experienced in the community in general and in the home and clan circle in particular. What has been referred to as 'The Ancestor Cult of the Africans' refers to this experience in the life of the people" (Setiloane 1986:17). Consequently, traditional rituals associated with rites of passage are important as they act as a link with the living dead, the ancestors, whose desire is the well-being and protection of their descendants and the means by which the life force is increased in the community. Kasenene (1994:139-147) clarifies that: "Rites of passage are performed from the time a person is conceived to ensure that vitality is promoted, maintained and strengthened" (Kasenene 1994:140). Diviners play an important role when the life force is diminished.

The concepts of vitality in African spirituality, enriching the well-being both of oneself and of others by means of the transmission of the life force/vital forces and the role of ritual,

[110] Setiloane describes *seriti* as being "derived from the same word-stem '-riti' as moriti – 'umthunzi' which means 'shadow' or 'shade'" (Setiloane 1986:13).

provide valuable insights which could be incorporated into the decolonisation and Africanisation of the Christian doctrine of ordination. Renewed emphases on bringing vitality to the community of presbyters and of the celebration of vitality in the ordination of presbyters need to be incorporated into an Africanised doctrine of ordination.

In addition, Richardson (2009:43-56) believes that: "Belonging in community is widely regarded as being the determinative experience at the heart of African life" (Richardson 2009:47). His view is supported by Mbiti (1969) who states that "[i]n traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole…. The individual can only say: 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am'. This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man" (Mbiti 1969:108-109). Setiloane (1986) even goes so far as to say that "A primary characteristic of African 'being' is its inclusiveness…'You cannot be a human alone'. *Motho ke motho batho*: Our humanity finds fulfilment only in community with others" (Setiloane 1986:37, 41).[111] Associated with the concept of communality is, therefore, the concept of *ubuntu* which will be discussed more fully in this chapter in section 4.3.2.2. The concept of communality in African spirituality, therefore, provides valuable insights into decolonising the doctrine of ordination with the MCSA being a connexional church and presbyters being in Full Connexion with the Conference (MCSA 2016a:37).

A third important contribution is the acceptance of the practices relating to African Traditional religion and those of the African Initiated Churches which do not compromise the Christian gospel and remain central to African spirituality but were rejected by the missionaries. Setiloane (1986) draws our attention to the difficulty of African people having to live in two worlds − traditional and Christian − when he states: "What has been happening in Africa is that African Christians have been living at two levels: their traditional African world view level and the Western cultural level" (Setiloane 1986:31). Nürnberger (2007) succinctly encapsulates the growing acceptance of African traditional religious practices, noting that "with increasing boldness articulate Christians, including prominent theologians, confess and affirm their African traditional heritage, including ancestor veneration, and strive to incorporate it into their spirituality and their theological system" (Nürnberger 2007:40). The premise of Nürnberger is supported by Rev Nyobole (2018b) who states that: "Most of us have found harmony in living in both worlds by expressing our African spirituality in a

[111] See also Kasenene 1994:141-142, Mbetwa 2018:66-68 and Ng'weshemi 2002:14-18.

way that is complementary and not contradictory to our understanding of Christianity. Ancestor veneration is part of what we would practise and most ministers do that. And I also do that every December…" (Nyobole 2018b).

The challenge of Grassow (2015:1-3) is: "We still need to engage the split spiritual personality of our members who are Methodist by day, and African Initiated Church by night. This includes the way we use traditional cultural practices at home, but hide them from our Methodist community as if being African was not acceptable in the Methodist Church" (Grassow 2015:1). These insights apply equally to ordained presbyters and to the dominant Western epistemology within the MCSA. During the interviews with the officials of the MCSA serving in leadership roles of the church, they confirmed that African traditional practices are incorporated into the spirituality of many African Methodist presbyters. In spite of that reality, both Abrahams (2018) and Nyobole (2018b) drew attention to the reticence of some candidates for the ministry, when expressing their call by God to the district synod, fearing that "things like visions and dreams may not be accepted as valid in articulating their call" (Nyobole 2018b). Similar sentiments are expressed by Abrahams (2018) noting that "we have black candidates for the ministry talking about dreams and being called, but they stop short in saying this is the ancestors speaking to them. They dress it up in more respectable language" (Abrahams 2018).

Keeping the research question in mind, it is vital to investigate and incorporate aspects of African spirituality with the emphases on humanness, holism, vitality and communalism as well as aspects of African Traditional religions to enhance the Africanisation of the doctrine and practices in the MCSA. It is my understanding that those aspects of African spirituality are not sufficiently evident in our present doctrine and practices and need to be considered for an Africanised model of ordination.

4.3.2 Contributions of southern African cultures and an African epistemology

Significant aspects of our southern African cultures and epistemology which will be helpful in the successful decolonisation and Africanisation of the doctrine of ordination will now be considered. The broadly encompassing definition of "culture" which I find helpful and will be used in this section of the study to evaluate the contribution of aspects of southern African culture is that of Kretzschmar (2009:217-231) who states that: "Culture, broadly understood

can be defined as an interconnected system of values, beliefs, social institutions, customs, rituals, traditions, language, and unwritten laws that give expression to the identity, sense of belonging, and the way of life of a group of people" (Kretzschmar 2009:219).

4.3.2.1 Leadership, authority and governance

Leadership is intricately bound up with people's culture. For this reason, African leadership, management and governance contribute important considerations to this study. However, it must be remembered that southern African leadership is different today from the pre-colonial era as a consequence of the influences of colonial Western management and leadership styles, resulting in our "wrestling with the contradictions and paradoxes posed by trying to define the very essence of African leadership" (Nkomo 2006:11). Understanding that there is not a single model of leadership, authority and governance, aspects from these elements in African culture will be considered.

Key features that have influenced African leadership include "kingship, gerontocracy and other cultural values such as interdependence, communalism, relationship-awareness and respectfulness" (Magezi 2015 1). Mtshiselwa (2017:403-420) expands on this understanding by quoting the Zulu proverb: "A chief is a chief through his subjects" (Mtshiselwa 2017:415), indicating that there is a balance of power between the ruler and the people and that the powers of those in leadership are not absolute as "[t]he king and rulers lead with counsellors" (Magezi 2015:6). While those in authority must lead, leadership is a shared responsibility within consultative processes.

The consultative processes in decision-making are characterised by the holding of an *imbizo* in the traditional setting or in conferencing in a more modern setting. Nkomo (2006:10-11) draws our attention to the principle that: "Rulers could seldom or never rule alone and they had to listen to their counsellors. Rulers were bound to give hearing to the opinions of ordinary folk" (Nkomo 2006:11). It is significant that the African *imbizo*, conferencing and the conducting of meetings are not simply to conclude the business on an agenda but are, importantly, opportunities to build relationships (Magezi 2015:1).

The manner in which a presbyter arrives at being ordained is a consultative process following the testing of the person's call to the ordained ministry and a period of formation. Malinga (2018), Mntambo (2018) and Nyobole (2018b) are concerned, however, that the community is not sufficiently involved in testing the call of a candidate to the ordained ministry and also

not when Conference decides on the worthiness of a candidate for ordination. Mntambo (2018) reflects that "[w]e need to relate ordination to the local people. It is the people who will come back and say, 'we trust this person to be our leader, our shepherd, among us'" (Mntambo 2018).

In the African economy, African leadership sets great store on standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before, not only of those who are living but also of those who have passed on (BMC 2015:3), whereby those in leadership build on and pass on the experience and wisdom from previous generations. Unfortunately, African leadership has sometimes been characterised by authoritarian, even despotic, leaders with Nürnberger (2007) noting that "[w]here accountability upward has lapsed and there is no accountability downward, it becomes so much easier for self-aggrandisement and abuse of power to take root" (Nürnberger 2007:194). This is a danger to be avoided in the considerations of this study.

In the light of the research question, the implications of the African concepts of leadership, authority and governance need to be considered and applied as they relate to the authority of Conference and the authority bestowed on a presbyter through ordination. Significant elements in the ordination service are the laying on of hands, prayer to the Holy Spirit and receiving of the Scriptures whereby Conference confers an authority on those ordained to function as a presbyter within the Church of God. In the MCSA, presbyters are tasked to "[t]ake authority for the office and work of a minister in the Church of Christ. Receive the Scriptures and bear witness by word and deed in the Church and in the world" (MCSA 2018d:5). "Ordination describes the act by which Christians are authorised by the Church to act in its name and on its behalf in certain ways" (MCSA 2016a:20). Ordination in the MCSA authorises the presbyter to fulfil God's calling on their life while being accountable to the Conference.

Ordination does not bestow kingship and authoritarian powers on the presbyter. The authority granted to function as a presbyter at ordination is not absolute, being limited at society, circuit and connexional level in terms of the consultative and cooperative procedures laid down in the *Book of Order* (MCSA 2016a). However, when presbyters and those in leadership assume an authority that is not rightly theirs, they are reverting to a "top-down" leadership style that is not in keeping with the consultative processes envisaged in the *Book of Order* (2016a).

The question which, therefore needs to be asked is that, if ordination is the bestowing of authority to function as a minister in the Christian Church, how does ordination in the MCSA relate to the doctrine of apostolic succession and priestly authority? As has been stated in Chapter 2, section 2.2.1, while not holding to the belief in an uninterrupted succession, the understanding of apostolic succession is set down in the *Yearbook* of 2002 (MCSA 2002) as follows:

> The ordained minister in Church tradition is one of the visible signs of the unity of the Church in space and time, and is one aspect among many of the concept of apostolic succession which links the Church today with the Church through the ages and the Church in the New Testament. It should be noted that the Methodist Church, and John Wesley himself, have never understood apostolic succession literally as an unbroken chain which passed on ordination from one person to the next, going back to the apostles. Rather we understand apostolic succession as the continuity with the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles. It is succession in the faith, witness, life and commission of the apostles and thus belongs to the Church as a whole and not to any group within it. It means standing in the same tradition of ministry as the apostles and that the authority to minister is given by Christ himself, rather than human hands" (MCSA 2002:14-15).

The question then becomes: "To whom does ordination belong?" Methodism is clear that ordination belongs to the Church, past and present, and that apostolic succession is not the passing on of the baton from individual to individual, but is the community of the church authorising certain persons to continue with the work of God's ministry in obedience to the commission of Jesus Christ (MCSA 2002:20-21).

This understanding of apostolic succession being linked to the community of the church, past and present, is in keeping with southern African culture and spirituality. The insights of Molo (2018) are helpful in supporting the Methodist understanding of apostolic succession by explaining that, in southern African culture, when a man returns from the mountain[112] and has been given the responsibilities of adulthood, he is now "not only responsible to himself but to the broader community and to those who came before him" (Molo 2018). His application of this premise to ordination is that "decolonising ordination means making sure that the whole community, both the living and the dead, reflects our commitment. When I get ordained I am not starting something new. I am joining millions of people who came before me and who have been serving God" (2018).

[112] The terminology of 'going to the mountain' or 'returning from the mountain' refers to a man attending the initiation school in preparation for acceptance into responsible adulthood by the community.

In addition, the understanding of the World Council of Churches (1982:1-31) supports that of Methodism in stating:

> Since ordination is essentially a setting apart with prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the authority of the ordained ministry is not to be understood as the possession of the ordained person but as a gift for the continuing edification of the body in and for which the minister has been ordained. Authority has the character of responsibility before God and is exercised with the cooperation of the whole community (1982:19).

A further implication of the granting of authority to the presbyter at ordination relates to the relationship between authority and status. The MCSA is clear that presbyters cannot assume to themselves nor allow others to confer on them a superior authority and status in the life of the church. Ordination does not bestow on clergy persons absolute power, status or a sense of elitism. Ordination does enable the presbyter to function as someone set apart to the specific ministry of Word and Sacraments within the Church of Christ as a servant of Christ and the community.

Rev Morgan (2018b) raised the problem of the superior authority, status and elitism of presbyters during the interview, stating that at "issue is not the doctrine but the people's perception of the ordained minister. In our context, it is still the case that an ordained minister is very highly regarded, especially in the black part of our church, and it can give a minister permission to become very dictatorial and authoritarian. The people will not complain about it because of the position of the minister that is set above everyone else" (Morgan 2018b).

The value of the limitation of authority, methodology in decision-making and the consultative processes in southern African culture, therefore, needs to be more clearly incorporated and adopted by presbyters as they function as servants of Christ. Presbyters need to be held accountable for the manner in which they have functioned during their Review of Ministry interview (MCSA 2016a:42).

The matter of the use and misuse of authority is not only restricted to presbyters but also to the perceived autocratic powers of Conference when acting as the "Church's governing authority and supreme legislative body" (MCSA 2016a:53). Such a call is also heard from presbyters when the Presiding Bishop is acting on behalf of the Conference and whose actions "shall be deemed to be the act of Conference or of the Connexional Executive and to have the full force and effect thereof" (2016a:57). On some occasions, presbyters observe the dissonance between the spirit of the *Book of Order* (2016a) and what they experience as the Conference acting in an autocratic and unsympathetic way. The methodology in the decision

and consultative processes in southern African culture should be more clearly adopted by the officials of the Conference and the Conference itself.

The African concepts of authority and governance also apply to the authority of the Conference in the stationing of presbyters. The itinerant stationing of presbyters by the Conference is a central tenet of Methodist ecclesiology. This practice was instituted by Rev Wesley in order to station his preachers where he, and then the Conference, believed they should be appointed for maximum impact of the Methodist movement and the gospel. In our southern African context, the consequence of this colonial system is that many clergy persons become separated from their partners and family, a practice reminiscent of the migrant labour system of the past in South Africa and one that is not conducive to the well-being of the clergy family.[113] While Conference, through the Connexional Executive, has the authority to station presbyters as they choose, the concepts of humanness, community and the well-being of the clergy family are important factors to be kept in mind when presbyters are stationed.[114]

A significant reflection by the General Secretary, Rev Morgan, on itinerancy in the MCSA is that: "There is nothing African about itinerancy. The idea of having to move and be a stranger every three or five years in a new community is very disruptive and you cause disruption and dissatisfaction in a community" (Morgan 2018b). She speculates on the impact the church could have in a community where the obvious successor had to rise up from within the community, be trained, ordained and then lead the community as someone who was known to and trusted by them (Morgan 2018b).

4.3.2.2 Inclusiveness, human relationships and the community

The second element to be considered from southern African culture is the communal nature of African society. Setiloane (1986) draws our attention to the premise that "[a] primary characteristic of African 'being' is its inclusiveness" (Setiloane 1986:37) and that community in the African tradition "is of the very essence of being…. You cannot be human alone. *Motho ke motho ka batho*: Our humanity finds fulfilment only in community with others. Basic to this African idea of Community and making it possible is the African 'experience' of

[113] See Williams and Bentley (2016:23-25) for a fuller description of the implications of presbyters being in a covenant relationship with the MCSA and how that impacts their well-being.
[114] This is possibly a matter for further investigation.

Botho-Ubuntu (Person-hood)" (1986:41-42).[115] Both Nürnberger (2007) and Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) (2014:489-501) support the premise that in African culture "a human being is a human being through other human beings" (Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) 2014:492) and that "Life as it is understood in Africa is life in community. Any particular part is embedded in the greater whole" (Nürnberger 2007:44).

Closely associated with the concept of humanness is the prominence of human relationships together with bearing responsibility for one another. The insight of Kasenene (1994:138-148) is that "*Muthu u bebelwa nunwe,* 'A person is born for the other.' This shows that, according to African philosophy, a person is a person through, with and for the community. Individualism is something new to Africa" (Kasenene 1994:141). Forster (2019:1-20) supports these premises, noting that the concept of African Christian Humanism "presents us with an ethical responsibility – because we are human, we bear responsibility for one another" (Forster 2019:14).

Allied to humanness and human relationships is the importance of the role of the community. Ng'weshemi (2002) draws our attention to the African belief and custom that "[i]t is in group relationships that one discovers one's full personality. The community, which includes both the living and the departed members, defines the person as a person, and not one's will, or some form of rationality, will, or memory…. To be human is first and foremost to be in a community, living responsively for the maintenance of life, and in relation with others" (Ng'weshemi: 2002:17, 151). Ketshabile (2012) concurs regarding the centrality of the community and communalism, stating that: "In African Traditional religion, particularly Batswana religion, the emphasis is on community and not the individual**.** The implication of this is that the individual cannot exist outside the community and in turn community does not refer to the living only, irrespective of whether they are Christian or not. It refers to both those in the present life and those who have departed" (Ketshabile 2012:187). In turn, Mtshiselwa (2011:668-689) highlights that the prominence in Western thinking on "[i]ndividualism is in contrast to the highly regarded communalism that constitutes

[115] *Botho-Ubuntu* is a significant concept in African culture and living and one referred to by many authors. I am drawing on the work of Dolamo (2013:1-10) to provide an overview of the concept. "Botho in the Sesotho languages, that is Sepedi, Setswana and (Southern) Sesotho, or ubuntu in the Nguni languages, that is isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele and isiSwati, is a South African way of expressing a way of living that is universal… To some botho/ubuntu means 'humanity' (Shutte 2001:2), while to others it means 'humanness' (Broodryk 2008:41). Explaining botho/ubuntu as humanity may be rather misleading and confusing, since humanity may simply refer to humankind. Humanness seems to be more appropriate as it refers to the inner core of an individual. It has to do with the soul of the person…. Botho/Ubuntu is the ideal of being human, derived from a worldview based on the guiding principle of "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" (I am a person through other persons) (Broodryk 2008:41)" (Dolamo 2013:1-2).

blackness" (Mtshiselwa 2011:683). This view is supported by Mdingi (2014) who believes that communalism "sets the platform for building, upon human relations that are resonant of others, a sense of people-ness that makes individuals and the community bilaterally connected and having symbiotic relations with sentimental value" (Mdingi 2014:65).

The role of community relationships, decision-making and consultation in southern African communities is reflected in Methodism's placing great store on the concept of connexionalism which impacts every aspect of the life of the church and of presbyters. Noteworthy examples of connexionalism in the MCSA are the annual Presbyters' Convocation, the annual Conference and the holding of congresses and consultations at significant times in order to charter new directions for the church and its ministry. Presbyters are required to attend or are appropriately represented by presbyters from all synods and organisations of the church at such events. Examples of congresses and consultations are Obedience 81 in 1981, the Journey to the New Land Convocation in 1993, the Mission Congresses in 2004 and 2016, the Ministerial Indabas of 2010, the annual Women in Ministry Consultations, the newly established annual Presbyters' Convocations and the meeting of the Black Methodist Consultations.

The significance of connexionalism, the Conference, convocations, congresses and consultations for this study is that such events provide opportunities for sharing, debate and listening, all of which activities are characteristic of African culture. In addition to providing vitality to the connexion, they are associated with the selection of a candidate for the ministry, their assessment of readiness for ordination, being present at the ordination service. They are often the pre-cursors of amendments to the strategy, programmes and emphases of the MCSA. An example is that of the Women in Ministry Consultations of 2014 and 2015 initiating the celebration of 40 years of ordination of women into the ministry of the MCSA in 2016. Another is their insistent calls for the inclusion of women in leadership positions in the MCSA in the light of "the persistence of continuing patriarchal attitudes at all levels of our church" (MCSA 2017a:244). These pleas ultimately led the Conference of 2018 (MCSA 2019a) to resolve that:

> as from 2019 Conference will ensure that the Church shall appoint women to the offices of the Connexion including, Bishops, Presiding Bishop and General Secretary and Lay President, ensuring 40% representation is maintained.
>
> If a District or the Connexion nominates or elects a man into such office at a time that less than 49% of its Bishops, Presiding Bishop, General Secretary and Lay President are

> women, Conference shall be required to make an appointment of a Bishop, Presiding Bishop, General Secretary or Lay President who is a woman (2019a:84).

Opportunities for vitalism, holism and communality to be exercised and for both the individual and the community to function and be bound together are present in the concept of connexionalism and should be adapted into the concept of connexionality as a means of further enriching an Africanised model of ordination.

4.3.2.3 Ritual, ceremonies and celebration

The third element to be considered from southern African culture is the importance of ritual, ceremonies and celebration. Edet (2010:305-315) notes that: "Ritual is a means by which humanity controls, constructs, orders, fashions, or creates a way to be fully human. Indeed, it gives meaning to the world, renews, and makes this right. It saves, heals, and makes whole again. Hence, ritual is necessary in our lives" (Edet 2010:306). Ng'weshemi (2002) endorses the importance of ritual and rites of passage associated with the life-cycle of a person from one stage to another, as they also define "the relationship of the community to an individual's changing place in the community" (Ng'weshemi 2002:19). The importance of ritual, according to Ng'weshemi, is that: "For Africans, one is not human simply by birth. Rather, one becomes human through a progressive process of integration in society" (2002:19). The words that: "Rituals are meant to protect and strengthen" (Nürnberger 2007:39), provide an additional dimension to be considered. Importantly, ritual plays a significant role in African life and spirituality: in becoming human; in communication with the ancestors (Nürnberger 2007:15);[116] and "in rites of passage as stipulated by the ancestors of the clan or ethnic group" (Ng'weshemi 2002:19).

Methodism incorporates both ritual and symbolism into worship, dress code, building construction and liturgy, as for example the wearing of a stole by a presbyter and the Passing of the Torch during the Reception into Full Connexion ceremony of those who are to be received into Full Connexion with the Conference (MCSA 2018c:1-3). As a symbol of the "handing over of the baton to those who are coming in, to carry the spear so to speak" (Nyobole 2018b), a retiring presbyter presents a lighted candle to the representative of the ordinands declaring: "We have carried the light of Christ in our ministries and in our lives. Now we share the light with you, as a sign that the labour of our generation will now be

[116] See Nürnberger 2007:38-39, 51, 131.

carried on by yours. Tend the light that is given you. We pray that the light of Christ will shine in and through you and your ministries" (MCSA 2018c:3).

However, the significance of ritual and the incorporation of additional rituals should be investigated and suitably incorporated into the MCSA. The challenge of Nürnberger (2007) that the Protestant religion has "underestimated the importance of ritual" (Nürnberger 2007:55) which plays such a major role in African spirituality, is relevant to the study. Forms of ritual are present in the ordination service such as the processional entry into the service, the dress code of those conducting the service, movement and dancing while singing, the laying on of hands, the opportunity for family and friends of each ordinand to stand during the ordination of those known to them and the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion. However, in the words of Nyobole (2018b): "There is not much of an African vibe in it" (Nyobole 2018b). It would be wise for the MCSA to investigate other meaningful rituals for incorporation into the service of ordination in order to further Africanise the event and its meaning for all present.

Ritual and celebration are important elements in creating and celebrating holism, vitalism and communalism as they provide a coming together of people with opportunities for the community to bond and to support one another. Events and ceremonies are communal affairs, attended by anyone and everyone, often at great expense, and are celebrated with exuberance, including speeches, movement, dance and song. The observation of Nürnberger (2007) that ritual and celebration should be given more attention by the MCSA is that "African religion is bristling with the quest for life in its fullness. Vitality, fertility, courage, endurance, healing, ecstasy, abandonment in rhythm, dance and song – these are some of the characteristics of African cultures" (Nürnberger 2007:43). The value of communal expression of emotion should be taken into account in the ritual and practices of ordination.

Rev Ketshabile (2012) provides an example of communal vitality in the burial customs of the Batswana people in attending the funeral service of someone from their community.

> In Southern Africa and among Batswana in particular, it is generally regarded as anti-community, anti-social and impolite not to attend the funeral service of a kin member, neighbour or that of a member of the community of which you are part…. Among Batswana, the feeling of an obligation to attend a neighbor's funeral is in no way connected to the fear that one might be suspected of being responsible for the neighbor's death. Attending a neighbor's funeral is part of *Botho* – being human. Setswana expression cited earlier, *moswi o tlareng fa ke sa ya a phitlhong ya gagwe* – "what will the deceased think of me if I do not attend his or her funeral?" is also an expression of a sense of indebtedness towards the deceased and his or her family, and the preservation

> and continuation of one's relationships with the family kin of the deceased – those who are alive and those who have passed on (2012:130).

It is noticeable in the MCSA that large numbers of clergy persons will attend the funerals of their colleagues and will travel long distances and endure great inconvenience to celebrate the life and ministry of a colleague with whom they were in connexion. These services are a time of celebration and vitalism and can last for hours.

Another significant ritual in the MCSA takes place during the ordination service when presbyters lay their hands on the head of the ordinand, symbolising his or her incorporation into the Order of Presbyters, the community of those who have been set aside to the ministry of Word and Sacraments. The authorisation to be ordained as a presbyter is granted by the Conference but it is those within the Order who are passing on the tradition of being set-aside to the ordained ministry by the laying on of hands. The newly ordained presbyter can now be said to be "standing on the shoulders" of those who have gone before. It is significant that the practice in which six presbyters, including presbyters from other recognised denominations, as well as the Lay President, lay their hands on the ordinand , circa 2001-2003, was discontinued "because the Bishops did not find a plausible theological rationale" (Nyobole 2018a).

The connexional understanding of ordination in the MCSA as the incorporation of the individual presbyter into the community of presbyters carries a deeper and broader significance than a personalised experience for the individual ordinand. This understanding is one readily accepted in African culture and is therefore helpful in the movement towards Africanising ordination. As Rev Molo (2018) states:

> At the core of African Spirituality is the idea of connectedness… When I get ordained I am not starting something new. I am joining millions of people who came before me and who have been serving God…. Ordination is being set aside. Because we are being set aside, we need to connect with the departed. That's what we do with the laying on of hands so that people are set aside. We can create a liturgy which allows us to connect with those who have come before us, those who have been ordained (2018).

A decolonised and Africanised liturgy which incorporates more fully the African concept of connectedness with the presbyteral community, past and present, would add meaning to the ritual of the laying on of hands in the ordination service.

In the light of the research question, the contribution that the African emphases on ritual, ceremonies and celebration could make to further Africanise the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA are to be explored. During the interview with the General Secretary,

Rev Morgan (Morgan 2018a) indicated that the corporate meaning of God's calling on all baptised persons to ministry, a call to the complementary contributions of laity and clergy, is now celebrated in the ordination service, using both words and ritual. A portion in the liturgy titled "Recognition of common ministry and reaffirmation of baptism" (MCSA 2017b:4) was introduced in 2017, providing "a moment of celebration of the church who witness the moment of ordination" (Morgan 2018a). The relevant portion of the adapted liturgy (MCSA 2018d:2) reads:

> *The Presiding Bishop, standing near the baptismal font, begins:*
>
> Ministry is the work of God, done by the people of God. Through baptism all Christians are made part of the priesthood of all believers, the church, Christ's body, made visible in the world. We all share in Christ's ministry of love and service for the redemption of the human family and the whole of creation.
>
> Therefore, in celebration of our common ministry, I call upon all God's people gathered here:
>
> *The Presiding Bishop may scoop and pour water from the font and say:*
>
> Remember you are baptised, and be thankful.
>
> [To which the congregation responds] **We reaffirm our baptism and our common call to ministry.**
>
> **Thanks be to God!** (MCSA 2018d:2).

In addition to this newly incorporated element into the service of ordination, it would be in the interests of Africanising the ordination service to revisit the centrality of celebration of significant rites of passage in southern African culture. While ordination could be likened to a rite of passage of the ordinand into the Order of Presbyters, it also has significance and meaning for the communities which raised the presbyters. The African epithet "I am because of you" emphasises that ordination in the African setting is a corporate event and is celebrated by families, congregations, friends and members of the Order of Presbyters, all of whom participate in the Christian formation, calling, acceptance and now the ordination of the presbyter. The celebration of the community's role and support of the ordinand at ordination is expressed in the liturgy stating that, while the Bishops and presbyters gather round and share in the laying on of hands, "[f]amily and friends of each Ordinand may stand in support and prayer during the laying on of hands upon the Ordinand" (MCSA 2018d:5). My understanding and experience are that this action of solidarity is insufficient for an Africanised model of ordination.

In the African tradition, the community would celebrate such an occasion with dance, song, ululation and oratory. However, we find a tension develops at ordination services where

people wish to celebrate the ordination of 'their' presbyter in African style and tradition but the constraints of time and the decorum of the service do not always allow for such exuberance and celebration, elements integral to the generation of vitality.

Rev Morgan (2018b) suggests that the celebration of ordination be extended to the families and local communities of each ordinand by a "Coming Home Celebration liturgy being developed which could be a wonderful moment of celebration within the community", as happens with the return of a man from initiation school (Morgan 2018b). This suggestion will be examined in more detail in Chapter 6, section 6.2.6.

Ritual, ceremonies and celebration are significant components of southern African culture and spirituality and should be restructured to form essential elements in the Africanising of ordination and its practices.

4.3.2.4 African feminism

The fourth element to be considered from southern African culture is the contribution of the African feminist strand which, together with aspects of Western feminism, would assist women to realise their worth and their place in the ministry of the church as presbyters. Chapter 3, sections 3.4 and 3.4.1, have described the negative impact of colonial and African paternalism and the counter-move towards the ordination of women presbyters in the MCSA. What will be argued here is the contribution of feminism to the theological debate relating to paternalism and colonialism.

In assessing African culture, two conflicting strains of thought are evident: the one comprising the traditional African culture of patriarchy; and the other the liberation and acceptance of the worth and role of women in society and their community. In African culture, women have had to compete with these conflicting ideologies as well as with the difference in the emphases of African feminism and Western/European feminism. Malinga (2018) clarifies the latter point, declaring that:

> There is a big difference between Western feminism and African feminism. In Western feminism, the emphasis is on the rights and the equality of genders with the rights of women to make choices and decisions on their own. African feminism takes into consideration issues of race and issues of economy because those are the experiences of African women. They would go back to see how colonialism affected black men, African men, and then how we are to work together with men to deal with those influences and to look at issues of poverty in society (Malinga 2018).

Oduyoye (2001) confirms the views of Malinga, indicating that "Women's theology is crafted in the midst of the ongoing life in Africa, overshadowed by economic exploitation, political instability and militarism…. In the midst of these challenges, African women carry on a mothering agenda, seeking to nourish the economically disadvantaged and socially marginalized people, as well as those blatantly discriminated against because of their colour or ethnicity" (Oduyoye 2001:23, 24).

It was the plea by the then Warden of the Deaconess Order of the MCSA, Rev A J Cook, that the exclusion of women from ministry be ended and then proposing "the admission of women to the ministry" (Oosthuizen 1990:75). Following the Conference of 1972, the report in the October edition of *Dimension* (1972a) reads: "Noting that a majority of the Synods has declared themselves in favour of opening the ministry to women, the Conference accepted a proposal by the Renewal Commission to this effect" (Dimension 1972a:1). This resolution led to the demise of discrimination against women as presbyters, with the first woman being ordained in 1976. Specific regulations concerning women presbyters were included in the 1997 edition of *Laws and Discipline* (MCSA 1997b) relating to women presbyters not able to take up an appointment "by reason of circumstances arising from her marriage" (MCSA 1997b:43) and regulations relating to "Maternity Leave" (1997b:43-44). The rights of women presbyters to be treated equally, encapsulated in Western Feminism and expressed by both men and women in the Conference, were being entrenched into MCSA polity together with the influences of "mothering" from African Feminism.

The additional influence of African feminism is evident in African authors interpreting the Scriptures of liberation from a feminist position and contrasting those texts to their lived experience of being stationed in outlying areas, often not receiving their stipends, continuing paternalism and being denied positions of leadership in the church. Sympathetic male and female presbyters and academics have worked together with these African women presbyters and academics[117] to bring about changes that would enhance the effectiveness and ministry of the women presbyters in the MCSA. An example of the struggle faced by women presbyters was given by Mntambo (2018) that, when African women challenge certain cultural practices, for example burial customs, this is seen as "disrespectful and their acceptance goes down" (Mntambo 2018).

[117] These persons include but are not limited to: Cochrane 1991:21-36, Kumalo 2006:256-257 and 2009:iii, 42-43, Marumo 2016:55-70, Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) 2012:205-216 and 2014:489-501, Mkhwanazi & Kgatla 2015:180-197; Mosala, B. 1986:129-133, Mtshiselwa 2015a: 1-8 and 2016:1-19, Mtshiselwa, V.N.N. &, Masenya (ngwan'a, Mphahlele), M. 2016:1-8 and West 2015: 21-31.

The influence of African feminism to find a practical way of working within the situation can be seen in the formation of the Women in Ministry Consultations in 1993 (MCSA 1993:294). The consultations provide a space for the women presbyters of the MCSA to find support and encouragement from each other (MCSA 2017a:207) as well as providing a collective opportunity for presenting proposals to the leadership of the MCSA regarding matters impacting their ministry. As described in Chapter 3, section 3.4.1, the Conference of 2016 acted on their substantive recommendations concerning "discrimination and justice issues relating to the ministry of women; representation of women in all structures of the church; reviewing and changing legislative and election processes; removing barriers to leadership; development of materials for addressing gender bias and sexism; and the holistic empowerment of women in the ministry" (MCSA 2017a:95).

In the light of the research question and the need to further contextualise the doctrine of ordination, the contribution which African feminism, supported by Western feminism, has to make must be incorporated into the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA. As it is clear that women presbyters are continuing to have to deal with matters of patriarchy, marginalisation and cultural beliefs which compromise the effectiveness of their ministry, the contributions of women presbyters and feminist theology are essential if the MCSA is to be transformed into an authentic African Church.

4.4 Formation of presbyters

The spiritual and academic formation of every presbyter who is called to serve in our African context is vital if the MCSA is to become an authentic African Church. In keeping with our Methodist ethos, Hoffman (2015:87-100) provides a meaningful definition of spiritual formation as "the intentional providing of opportunities to deepen the spiritual journey of students (and faculty) through the integrating of the intellectual, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions of life" (Hoffman 2015:87). Naidoo (2010:185-195) concurs, recording that "[s]piritual formation is a lifelong process of becoming, of being formed and developed into the likeness of Christ. It is personal and relational formation which seeks to promote encounter and cooperation with God and society as a whole" (Naidoo 2010:187).

The prominence in African culture of people being intentionally formed within a community and by the community is one which should influence the formation of presbyters in the

MCSA. Ng'weshemi (2002) draws our attention to the fact that "[i]ndividuals obtain their basic identity by belonging to the community. The underlying thinking here is that an individual is never born whole and fully human. One is prepared…to become a vital, upright, responsible and well humanized individual member of one's community in particular, and humankind in general" (Ng'weshemi 2002:18).

The formation of presbyters in the MCSA has undergone significant changes from the initial race-based separation of training institutions to the establishment in 1993 of the residentially integrated 3 Phase formation and training programme centred at John Wesley College in Pretoria, except for a few students who were at Rhodes University until 1999. The colonial vestiges of separate and differentiated training for theological students according to race were now something of the past with the Conference of 2005 resolving that academic training and formation "be relocated to Pietermaritzburg as an autonomous member of the Cluster of Theological Institutions" (MCSA 2006:77). Significantly, the newly-established institution came to be known as the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary in honour of the first black President (Presiding Bishop) of the MCSA, a man who enjoyed a vital interest in education and whose interest "culminated in the establishment of a number of educational institutions through the Methodist Church" (Kumalo & Richardson 2010:262).

In keeping with the intention of presbyteral formation by the MCSA, the Mission Statement of the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS 2018) reads: "To form transforming leaders for church and nation by providing the spiritual formation, academic and practical training required to develop skilled Methodist ministers of integrity, faithfulness and excellence" (SMMS 2018:4). The 'Exit outcomes' of the formation of presbyters are clearly defined with seminarians being assessed in the following fields: Spiritual, Moral and Religious character; Believes and preaches our Doctrines; Observes and enforces our discipline; Competent abilities for our work – spiritual, vocational, social, personal, ethical and academic" (2018:21).[118] On completion of their three years of formation, the SMMS Certificate of Completion of the Formation for Ministry Programme (2018:26) is forwarded to the sponsoring church together with a 'Letter of Concern' or a 'Letter of Encouragement' should that be required relating to their assessment of the seminarian's formation and possible future growth areas (2018:26).

[118] Each of these fields relate to the 'Discipline questions' asked of every presbyter at the annual Presbyters' Convocation as set down in the *Book of Order* (MCSA 2016a:189) and the 2018 *Yearbook* (MCSA 2018a:93).

As the goal of the formation of presbyters is to serve in the Southern African Connexion, an important challenge is ensuring that the curriculum and dominant epistemology being presented at SMMS is African and not European. Mekoa (2018:87-110) describes this approach as Afrocentrism which he defines as "a manner of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values and perspectives predominate…. The main objective of Afrocentric studies is that African ideals and values should be at the centre of any analysis involving African culture and behaviour" (Mekoa 2018:93). The challenge of Naidoo (2016:1-8) is that "[t]he dominant Eurocentric universality claim must continue to be challenged and dismantled in order to make room for other theological traditions to become included as partners in an authentic and mutual dialogue" (Naidoo 2016:2). This perception is an important one for the MCSA in the training and formation at SMMS and in post-ordination training, remembering that the "Western menu is not free of salmonella" (Mbetwa 2018:187). Such a change "would involve a reassessment of pedagogy, theological content, methods of communicating and knowledge construction" (Naidoo 2015:77).

The need for the dominant Eurocentric epistemology to be challenged, is also supported by Higgs (2015:43-56) who states that "it is important for African community-based theological education to acknowledge the validity of other non-African knowledge systems in theological education, and, at the same time, integrate indigenous African knowledge systems with these" (Higgs 2015:52). He also contends that, if theological education is to be relevant in its outreach in Africa, "then [it] not only needs to take into account indigenous African knowledge systems, but also needs to direct attention towards the needs of the African communities…. Theological education should be closely linked to communal values" (2015:51).[119] An African epistemology, African knowledge systems, communal formation and the intention to be relevant to all aspects of the lives of African people are significant elements in the formation of presbyters and in the decolonisation and Africanisation of ordination.

In her address to the Mission Congress of 2016, Malinga (2016c:1-6) pleads that the determination of the MCSA to "form transformative ministers in the MCSA" (Malinga 2016c:2) be implemented as "clergy are leaders of mission and they are role models of leadership in congregations" (2016c:3). It is significant that her desire is contained in the Mission Statement of SMMS "[t]o form transforming leaders for church and nation…." (SMMS 2018). Kretzschmar (2002:41-60) records the necessity for "moral and spiritual

[119] See also Naidoo 2016:3-4.

formation of their leaders" (Kretzschmar 2002:53) as "there is a link between leadership and character" (2002:53) and contends that "Africa needs leaders of integrity and competence rather than leaders who are immoral and who misuse power" (2002:46). The inculcation of a transformed model of leadership by both the institution of formation and the community during the formation period of presbyters will enhance leadership for ministry and mission in an Africanised doctrine of ordination.

In keeping with the desire to form presbyters as people of integrity and to hold them accountable for their conduct, the Conference of 2018 adopted an extensive document titled "Principles Guiding Clergy Conduct" (MCSA 2019a:19, 123-126). This document sets before presbyters their calling to be set apart to the ministry of Word and Sacraments; their commitment to the Methodist Rule of Life; their conduct to be guided by the 12 Rules of a Helper; to be examples of a Christ-like life for believers; and to be guided by their ordination vows and the undertakings made when they were received into Full Connexion (MCSA 2019a:123-126). The required conduct of every MCSA presbyter is now clearly set down together with a measuring staff that will enable each presbyter to be held accountable.

The statement by Higgs (2015:43-56) that: "Communalism and the African spirit of *ubuntu* represent the resources for the decolonisation of theological education in Africa" (Higgs 2015:53) is significant for the study as it provides an opportunity to raise some of the opportunities and challenges arising from African culture's emphases on community and *ubuntu* specifically related to the formation of presbyters. These would include how to control and not abuse power (Naidoo 2015:74);[120] deal with diversity of cultures as well as diversity in the teaching staff of the training institution (Naidoo 2015:71-75); encourage and accept the role and leadership of persons of a different gender (Trisk 2015:57-59); and learn "what it means to be an individual and what it means to be part of a community" (Klaasen 2015:108) by "emphasising the necessity of inter-relatedness and interdependence" (Naidoo 2016:6).

Klaasen (2015:101-113) raises the matter of "serious moral issues that have confronted the Church in the post-apartheid South Africa" (Klaasen 2015:101-102) and observes that "Division, materialism and greed…are also prevalent among church ministers" (2015:101). The training community should actively participate in the moral formation of presbyters where "the community, through its communitarian nature, forms the minister into a morally

[120] See also Klaasen 2015:110.

responsible human being who has a common humanity with other selves within the community as well as with those beyond" (2015:112).

The plea of Klaasen is relevant in the light of the concerns raised by the MCSA relating to moral issues that have arisen at SMMS and the resolution of Conference that "Conference notes with concern the alleged improper sexual behaviour and conduct of the Seminarians and affirms the work done by SMMS to promote higher levels of consciousness and commitment to sexual sanctity and fidelity in marriage" (MCSA 2015:83). The concern of Conference includes allegations of sexual abuse in the broader MCSA with the Conference of 2017 resolving that "the Methodist Church of Southern Africa establish a confidential mechanism where female clergy can share their stories of abuse without fear of jeopardizing their ministry. This process does not preclude disciplinary procedures or appropriate remedial action for those accused of the offence and extends to the seminary" (MCSA 2018a:101).[121]

For the purposes of this study, it is appropriate to discern how SMMS and the MCSA are dealing with decolonisation and Africanisation in the formation of seminarians and presbyters. Rev Vido Nyobole, the acting President of SMMS, speaks of steps that have been taken to Africanise SMMS and introduce an African epistemology. These include acknowledging the need for diversity[122] regarding the appointment of lecturers and staff; the intentional appointment of lecturers from other African countries "to infuse African thinking in our theological education" (Nyobole 2018b); and the importance of spiritual and personal formation through cell/accountability groups, chapel services and times of silence (2018b). He also indicates that in the course on African theology, seminarians are taught about African theology and the African world so that they are able to minister when called upon by families during their ministry. An opportunity is given for students to learn an indigenous African language or that of a neighbouring African state (2018b).

However, the Dean of the Chapel and Head of Formation at SMMS acknowledges that at SMMS "we are still very Western. We are not cooking in African pots. Our academic curriculum is Western. Our method of teaching is Western and even our formation activities

[121] In order to deal with sexual harassment in any form within the MCSA, the *Book of Order* (2016a:209-216) sets down the Harassment Policy (2015) and procedures to be followed.

[122] This process is in keeping with the resolution of the Conference of the MCSA that "Conference refers the issue of staff appointments to the SMMS Council for consideration, encouraging the Council to be aware of the sensitivities around transformation in all appointments (cf Yearbook, pg 85). Conference further requests the SMMS Council to develop a policy of affirmative action and/or equal opportunity as part of our transformational processes" (MCSA 2010:82).

are not fulfilling an African culture. It is on the agenda but the fulfilment of it is the challenge" (Sifo 2018).

As spiritual formation is an ongoing process, the Conference of 2017 affirmed the need for and importance of post-ordination formation by resolving that "Conference endorses a Continuation Ministerial Formation programme and directs EMMU to facilitate implementation" (MCSA 2018a:94) thereof. Post-ordination training is now prescribed for all presbyters, together with regulations for accountability of participation in the processes. The programme is set down in the Yearbook (MCSA 2018a:94-95) and requires that:

1. All ordained presbyters in active ministry shall participate in mandatory Continuing Ministerial formation. Each presbyter is required to do at least 100 hours of learning/study a year (about 12 days) in the areas of choice.
2. Accountability groups consisting of the Superintendent, a Society Steward and 2 Lay persons, be established for each minister. For Superintendents the group will consist of the Bishop, a Circuit Steward and 2 Lay persons.

The task of the accountability group will be:

- To carry out a Review of Ministry process (L&D 4.79.1)[123] (HR Unit to provide a standard review format)[124]. The aim of the review is to help a minister identify her/his strengths, passion, gifts and how these contribute to the wellbeing of the circuit/society/community or the church at large as well as areas of weakness in which s/he needs development/ empowerment. This process will assist ministers in choosing areas of study to focus on each year.
- To provide mentorship and supervision by meeting with the minister bi-annually to discuss progress.
- To give a mentorship report on the minister at the Presbyter Convocation.

3. EMMU in consultation with DEWCOM to identify and propose preferred institutions and programmes for Continuing Ministerial Formation and report to Conference 2018.
4. The Finance Unit in consultation with EMMU and the Mission Unit[125] to identify financial resources and /or propose the way of funding CMF[126] and report to Conference 2018. (MCSA 2018a:94-95).[127]

[123] This sections reads: "For accountability purposes, every Minister's work shall be reviewed bi-annually through an interview process (Review of Ministry)" (MCSA 2016a:42).
[124] The HR Unit is the Human Resources Unit of the MCSA located at the Methodist Connexional Offices, Johannesburg.
[125] The Mission Unit of the MCSA is located at the Methodist Connexional Offices, Johannesburg.
[126] CMF is the Continuation Ministerial Formation programme of the MCSA.
[127] The resolution of the 2018 Conference reads: "Conference resolves that, from the Mission Resource Fund, the Connexion will, as far as possible, contribute 70% to the cost of Continuing Ministerial Formation while individual ministers contribute 30%. At the production of evidence for the registration for the relevant course the MCO will pay the amount either directly to the institution or refund the minister. NOTE: This does not include the cost of further Academic studies" (MCSA 2019a:85).

The requirement of doing a minimum of 100 hours of study, coupled with the opportunity of each presbyter being mentored and being held accountable for their growth and continuing formation is essential in the processes begun at SMMS "[t]o form transforming leaders for church and nation by providing the spiritual formation, academic and practical training required to develop skilled Methodist ministers of integrity, faithfulness and excellence" (SMMS 2018:4). These combined processes will enable the MCSA "to grow a thriving, learning, engaged Order of Presbyters" (MCSA 2019a:19).

In spite of these positive contributions to the initial and ongoing formation of presbyters, our attention is drawn to two concerns in light of the research question for this study. The first relates to the perceived lack of an African epistemology and an African teaching methodology at SMMS. Both persons interviewed from the seminary spoke of some steps in this direction but are of the opinion that more needs to be done for SMMS and the MCSA to be further transformed.

A concern raised by Nyobole (2018b) in incorporating an African narrative and African theology at SMMS is that "we have few African writers who are writing about African religion…. We don't have new African writers coming in and writing…. What is limiting is the lack of body knowledge that is mostly Western" (Nyobole 2018b). This view is supported by the premise of Mhango (2016:87-104) that "Africans including political leaders need to write new books dealing with the current situation without referring to a true history of Africa that they have to rewrite altogether" (Mhango 2016:96).

The insights of Maluleke (2006:61-76) could assist the MCSA and SMMS in the Africanisation of SMMS. He writes that "conscious, deliberate ideological choices of teaching style, teaching content and personnel must be made if Africanization is even to begin. Such choices will include more communal styles of teaching and assessment, a bias towards typical African issues, the training and recruitment of African theologians rather than a reliance on expatriates as well as a special effort to include the works of African Christian thinkers and writers in theological curricula" (Maluleke 2006:72).

The second concern relates to the lack of proficiency by many white presbyters to communicate in an indigenous language. This concern is raised in the light of the statement by wa Thiong'o (1986) that "the domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized" (wa Thiong'o 1986:16). Lamentably, few white presbyters are proficient in an indigenous African

language**.** While SMMS offers "the opportunity for tutelage" (SMMS 2018) as "a voluntary learning experience" (Nyobole 2018b), such competency is not a requirement for ordination by the MCSA.[128] A positive step taken by SMMS, and one to be commended, is the compilation of the multi-lingual Worship Book of songs and liturgies for use in the chapel services. Leading and participating in multi-lingual worship services is an opportunity to gain a working knowledge of African languages.

However, the resolution in the *Book of Order* (2016a) that "[a]ll Ministers are urged to undertake the study of at least 1 (one) African language" (MCSA 2016a:42) indicates that the MCSA encourages learning an African Language but this is neither a requirement for ordination nor stipulated in the Continuation Ministerial Formation programme (post-ordination training). Molo (2018) is of the belief that competency in an African language:

> is an imperative of our time. If we are going to talk about issues of decolonising, we need to accept the metaphors people are using and understand what they mean. We need to access the metaphors and understand how people communicate meanings among themselves. But most importantly, the demographics are such that we have to discover ways to act and live among one another in a meaningful way. In this church of ours, we will never find a community that is purely white. We will never get that again nor a single cultural congregation, for example, only a Xhosa congregation…. It is more than just appearing nice. It is an imperative (Molo 2018).

Bishop Mntambo (2018) introduces a complementary insight from his interaction with white colleagues extending their regret at not knowing an African language to include a sense of shame and collusion in statements such as: "'To my shame I have not learnt to speak your language'. Part of their shame is whether I have been part of that oppression which may not have been physical. I was distancing myself from people in not learning their language…. There is a deep regret in people, a very painful regret, which I wish I could do something about" (Mntambo 2018). His response is that we need to get rid of the sense of shame as we are all products of our history. However, he is committed to the principle that it should be a requirement of every presbyter to learn a language that the person does not know.

An observation arising from the interviews conducted is that the necessity to diversify our use of language and the ability of all presbyters to be able to speak an African language other than their mother tongue, was a matter raised by every participant in some form or another.[129]

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[128] The 2018 Student Handbook (SMMS 2018) sets down the expectations and provisions for all students to voluntarily learn an additional language while at seminary (SMMS 2018:31).

[129] Significantly, the two matters of the dress code of presbyters and the lack of diversity in language were concerns raised by all persons interviewed, suggesting that these two elements require further attention at all levels of the MCSA.

The general consensus is that it would be desirable, if not compulsory, for competency in an African language be a requirement for ordination and/or as an elective in the Continuation Ministerial Formation programme.

The conclusions being drawn are that, while the changes from a colonial formation have been significant and that SMMS has the potential to transform the formation of Methodist presbyters, additional steps need to be taken in order to fulfil an Africanised formation of presbyters and for an African narrative to be the dominant narrative of the church. The MCSA, together with the relevant persons at SMMS, need to re-evaluate the existing processes to further equip our presbyters for ministry in our African context. The newly instituted Continuing Ministerial Formation programme (MCSA 2018a:94-95) and the Principles Guiding Clergy Conduct are significant steps in the continuing formation of presbyters and in holding presbyters accountable for their conduct.

And lastly, our African theologians are encouraged to publish on African theology in order to contribute to the body of knowledge that is primarily Western and European. Having an epistemology that is strikingly African and by making it compulsory for every presbyter to gain competency in a language they do not know will make significant contributions to an Africanised MCSA and help eradicate what the Mission Congress of 2016 called "our selective itinerancy" (MCSA 2016c:1).

4.5 Critique of a southern African epistemology

Together with the voices of those crying for decolonisation are voices offering a critique of decolonisation which also need to be considered. In offering these evaluations, I am aware that the majority of them are from white voices. I am a white male person who ministered both during the apartheid era and in post-apartheid South Africa and this will also influence my appraisal. Without wishing to take sides or to act as a mediator, what follows is my understanding of the complexities arising from integrating traditional and modern, Western and African schools of thought into the epistemology and practice of the Methodist Church.

It is my conviction that an Africanised doctrine and practices of ordination will differ significantly from the Methodist Church into which I was ordained. The options are to remain rooted in the past; to throw away the past in order to introduce a totally new understanding; or to incorporate a new model which includes relevant aspects from the past as well as

African theology and an African narrative. It is not my understanding that decolonising and Africanising ordination in the MCSA will necessitate discarding all Western and European elements. There is much in common between the two epistemologies. I am of the opinion that Western elements can be placed into the African pot, together with the African ingredients, in order to produce a doctrine and practices that are dominantly African in their content and which differ from those of the Methodist Church in Britain or of the United Methodist Church of the United States of America. What that doctrine will look like will be investigated in Chapters 5 and 6.

While needing to incorporate elements from traditional African culture and an African epistemology into a decolonised doctrine of ordination, the possible negative impact of an African epistemology and culture also needs to be considered. The analysis of the negative consequences of colonialism, as determined in Chapter 3, sections 3.1-3.5, indicate that both Western colonialism and aspects of African culture have contributed to the continued presence of elements of discrimination and colonisation in the MCSA. It is, therefore, important to critique whether rejecting the colonial epistemology and culture and adopting an African epistemology and culture could result in unintended consequences. This evaluation will take place noting the words of caution by Tsele (1994:125-137) that "not everything belonging to the African heritage is necessarily liberating and critical. African submissiveness, humility and uncritical respect for authority have resulted in conservatism and passivity" (Tsele 1994:133-134). A further word of caution is provided by Mokhoathi (2017:1-14) not to fall into the trap of "*adiaphora*" (Mokhoathi (2017:1-14) by accentuating the positive while rejecting the negative aspects of African culture. It is also salutary to remember that doggedly adhering to traditionalism can entrap one "in intellectual infertility" (Mbetwa 2018:151).

Specific concerns raised by authors relating to an African narrative include the "sacralisation of power" (Muller 2015:3), "the tendency to deify figures of power" (2015:3) and to "legitimate a status quo of authoritarian rule" (2015:4). Gĩtĩtĩ (2014) warns of runaway dictatorship, the sense of "inherited entitlement" and calls for accountability and restraints of power (Gĩtĩtĩ 2014: 66, 69).[130] The role of tribalism and ethnicity has also been raised within and outside of the MCSA. Writing in the November 2016 edition of *New Dimension,* Kamogelo Monoametsi raises the matter of tribalism and ethnicity in South African society by asking, "Is the MCSA a united kingdom or a divided one? Do we see ourselves as

[130] See also Ndĩgĩrĩgĩ 2014:187-188.

representatives of the Kingdom of God or our ethnic and tribal kingdoms?" (Monoametsi 2016:13). A similar concern was raised by the Conference of 2006 with "race, gender, language and tribal identity" (MCSA 2007:7) being cited as factors in the stationing of presbyters.

In 1994, the concern of Pityana (1994:173-183) was "the failure of Black theology, especially in South Africa, to accommodate feminist or women theology" (Pityana 1994:181). In 2015, Mtshiselwa (2015a:1-8, 2016:1-19 and 2017b:403-420) indicated that paternalism and male domination continue with the warning that "[t]he patriarchal society of Southern Africa, in which the MCSA operates, continues to disempower women" (Mtshiselwa 2016:14). This concern is borne out in the chauvinistic remarks by a presbyter in a leadership position of the MCSA in 2018 regarding women presbyters that was embarrassing for the MCSA (MCSA 2018f).

African women continue to demand an end to paternalism and male domination, for their voices to be heard and for their inclusion in all areas of life and society. Decisions to end paternalism are taken but that is not what they are experiencing, resulting in the Conference of 2018 resolving that from 2019 "Conference will ensure that the Church shall appoint women to the offices of the Connexion including, Bishops, Presiding Bishop and General Secretary and Lay President, ensuring 40% representation is maintained" (MCSA 2019a:84) and it is considering such a requirement at synod, circuit and society levels from 2020 (2019a:84-85).

Authors also highlight the impact of communalism in African culture where "the harmony of the group logically means that the individual's insights, needs and autonomy are of lesser importance; they are subsumed to the needs of the collective" (Kretzschmar 2008:86). The danger that communalism "thinks for you, plans for you and decides for you under the façade of benevolent oversight" (Mbetwa 2018:55) is important in the context of this study. Kretzschmar (2008:63-96) also draws our attention to other weaknesses of communalism including that communalism can restrict an individual's autonomy, needs, beliefs, values, ethics and the freedom to challenge one's superiors; is ineffective in dealing with the abuse of power; and suppresses criticism for the sake of loyalty and obedience (Kretzschmar 2008:85-89). The conclusion drawn by the author is that: "What must become central to African spirituality, then, is not simply the theory of *ubuntu*, but the ethics of *ubuntu*. Thus, African Christianity needs to not only stress the many positive elements of its African heritage, but also recognise and resist its weaknesses" (2008:90).

Mbetwa (2018) highlights other unintended consequences and dangers of communalism including the tendency "to favour their kind" (Mbetwa 2018:71); the sense of "*entitlement* to the gradual neglect of *obligation*" (2018:80); "a truth deficit" (2018:86); a "sensitivity deficit…in inconveniencing other people" (2018:87); the abuse of the concept of "*ibuntu*" [sic] (2018:97); a sense of "fatalism" (2018:106); and the loss of a sense of achievement by the individual for their "rigorous productivity" (2018:122).

With the MCSA being a connexional church that is subject to the authority of the Conference, the stationing of presbyters, their accountability to the Conference and the dangers of communalism overshadowing the needs and autonomy of an individual presbyter must be taken into consideration in an Africanised model of ordination.

In order to deal with the possible excesses of African leaders and their leadership, the concepts of servanthood and authority need to be revisited and re-emphasised. de Wet (2015:129-141) and Magezi (2015:1-9)[131] propose the merging of the concepts of "kingship and servanthood" (Magezi 2015:6) epitomised in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ while Schubert and Kretzschmar (2009:326-340) note that, as "Power is central to leadership" (Schubert & Kretzschmar 2009:322), it is imperative "to revise our understanding of authority and power" (Kretzschmar 2002:50). With a "link between leadership and character" (2002:53), it is essential that the formation of moral character be more fully integrated into the processes of spiritual formation.

While African culture and an African epistemology have much that the Africanisation of the doctrine of ordination could build on, consideration should also be given to the pitfalls to be avoided and lessons to be learnt. A timeous warning by Storey (2014:75-88) is that "wherever the church is too ready to uncritically validate the culture around it, whether in Europe, the Americas, Australasia or in Africa, theology is subsumed and culture prevails. Christ becomes diluted and theology is hijacked by not just the virtues but also the sins of the culture" (Storey 2014:88). These insights will be kept in mind in the following chapter when examining the Africanisation of the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA.

[131] See also Mostert 2005:26-27 and Nkomo 2006:10-11.

4.6 Conclusion

The literature study has confirmed that, while adaptations have been and are able to be made to the doctrine and practices of the MCSA, the MCSA has not adequately adapted and contextualised the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination from our colonial past to our southern African context. This chapter has examined the central features of decolonisation and Africanisation; the contributions which southern African culture offers in Africanising ordination; the formation of presbyters; and how the doctrine and practices need to be applied differently within the MCSA. The examination extended beyond the doctrine and practices into the milieu of the MCSA in order to gain an understanding of the context into which the Africanised doctrine of ordination is to be placed.

This examination indicates that aspects of African religion and culture have significant contributions to make in further contextualising ordination in the MCSA. Aspects to be considered could include making the institutional culture more Afrocentric; the epistemology more strongly African; giving the cultural diversity and plurality of beliefs and customs of the people of southern Africa appropriate recognition; and incorporating them into the formulations, training and praxis of our church. However, the possible pitfalls and unintended consequences in adopting the proposed changes also need to be recognised as they could reinforce the toxic aspects of the colonial narrative. Not all the ingredients grown in African soil are desirable.

In the following chapters, the doctrine and practices of ordination will be evaluated and assessed together with applying the contributions of aspects of southern African culture and spirituality that have been identified to both the doctrine and the practices of ordination in order that the MCSA becomes an “authentic African Church” (MCSA 1994:376).

Chapter 5

Africanising the doctrinal elements of ordination

The following two chapters will propose an Africanised model of ordination for the MCSA in order to determine how a decolonised and Africanised ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination would be very different from and more appropriate to the present formulations and practices. The previous chapters have established that the doctrine and practices of ordination remain colonial, have not been sufficiently adapted to the southern African context and that the assimilation of aspects of southern African culture would contribute significantly to the contextualisation of the doctrine and practices of ordination. As doctrine determines practice, the essential elements of the doctrine of ordination in the MCSA will be discussed in this chapter, utilising the liturgy of the *Ordination Service* (MCSA 2018d:1-11). The intention is to help answer the research question: Have the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA been effectively adapted from our colonial past to our southern African context? Chapter 6 will examine how what we believe leads to how we act by examining the research question with particular reference to the practices of ordination.

The methodology to be adopted in this chapter is to clarify each essential element of the doctrinal components of ordination, for each to be appraised in terms of their congruency with southern African culture and religion and to determine whether each has been adequately Africanised from our colonial past. Thereafter, proposals as to how the introduction of aspects from southern African culture and spirituality could assist when Africanising the doctrinal aspects of ordination will be presented. While this chapter will be looking specifically at the doctrine of ordination, this doctrine forms part of the greater doctrine of the Christian Church and the continuation of the ministry begun by Jesus Christ in establishing the Kingdom of God and must be understood in that larger context.

It is important to emphasise that the essential elements embodied in the doctrine of ordination are not at variance with southern African culture but require to be decolonised and Africanised in order to be relevant to our southern African context, as will be indicated at the relevant places within this chapter. This finding is supported by the respondents during the interview processes indicating that southern African culture and spirituality have much in

common with the essential elements of ordination and that aspects of African culture and African Christianity can contribute significantly to the Africanisation of ordination. The premise that an Africanised doctrine will of necessity be incompatible with the colonial understanding is not supported in African theology and African Christianity with Maluleke (2004:181-191) indicating that "there is no paradox in being black and Christian" (Maluleke 2004:186). Nor is it valid to differentiate between African Christianity and Western Christianity as if Western Christianity is the norm by which Christian doctrines and practices are to be evaluated. The two are not mutually opposed.

The insights of Maluleke (2004) in this Africanisation project are helpful when he warns that "[w]e make a mistake therefore when we constantly seek to understand and evaluate African Christianity against the framework of either conventional Christianity (often theologically) or conventional African religion (often phenomenologically)…. What we need to do is to begin looking at this new religion in its own terms and not constantly judge it against either conventional Christian doctrine or conventional African religion" (2004:188, 189). Broodryk (2010a) concurs, stating that "African religion cannot just be wished away, and is found all over South Africa. Due to its close affiliation with the uBuntu worldview and general religiosity, universal positive values are strongly supported and propagated. African religion is not a revealed religion, but a natural religion" (Broodryk 2010a:155).

It is helpful to note that the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), while becoming a separate branch of the Methodist denomination as "a church organized by people of African descent" (AME n.d.), insist that "[i]t is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners,… Every particular Church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies so that all things may be done to edification" (AME n.d.). The Africanising of the doctrine and practices of ordination are, therefore, appropriate within the Methodist denomination.

However, the warning of Mokhoathi (2017:1-14) of the danger that contextualising Christianity in our African context can lead to syncretism when both "lose their uniqueness when expressed with the other" (Mokhoathi 2017:4) also needs to be considered. The dangers of incorporating those African elements that would perpetuate the attitudes and practices associated with colonialism also need to be kept in mind.

5.1 Affirming the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers

The extensive discussion in Chapter 1, section 3.1, regarding the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers draws our attention to the fact that the Methodist denomination holds dearly to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and is committed to the tenet that ministry is the task of every baptised person. It is significant that immediately following the opening hymns and prayer of the ordination service is the liturgy relating to the "Recognition of our common ministry and reaffirmation of baptism" (MCSA 2018d:2) which declares: "Ministry is the work of God, done by the people of God. Through baptism, all Christians are made part of the priesthood of all believers, the church, Christ's body, made visible in the world. We all share in Christ's ministry of love and service for the redemption of the human family and the whole of creation" (MCSA 2018d:2). The ministry of the Church is bound to the ministry of Christ as "[a]ll Christian ministry, whether we are thinking of the ministry of the whole people or of the ministry of those ordained to special offices, is a participation in the ministry of Christ" (Macquarrie 1977:420).[132]

The Scriptures, particularly the Pauline writings such as 1 Corinthians chapter 12, declare that, as baptised persons who constitute the body of Christ, each person is to fulfil their God-given and God-empowered role for the common good of the body of Christ. Willimon (2002) stresses that "Ministry is a gift of baptism… [and is] also an assignment" (Willimon 2002:28). Consequently, every baptised Christian is a minister in the Christian Church for whom the question is not, "'Am I called to ministry?' but rather, 'To which ministry am I called?'" (2002:44). The phrasing of Au (1995:391-406) is helpful as he supports this premise stating "baptism confers on all Christians a rightful share in the ministry of Jesus…. A spirituality of collaborative ministry must, therefore, recognize the common discipleship of all the baptised" (Au 1995:393). Küng (1968) is adamant that "[t]he Church is the body of Christ, and… this means that not just a few especially distinguished members, but all the members of the body of Christ are important and play their part" (Küng 1968:370).

[132] See also Moltmann 1992:301-314 for an extensive discussion on all baptised persons being called to service in the Kingdom of God.

The commitment of the MCSA to the doctrine of every member ministry the priesthood of all believers is evidenced in the inclusion of such a statement in every *Yearbook* from 1999 (MCSA 1999/2000:2) to the present (MCSA 2019a:2). The doctrine of the ordination of presbyters must be understood within the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers with the MCSA (MCSA 2016a:12) declaring that:

> The Methodist Church, therefore, holds that while certain of its members are called of God and are ordained and separated to the holy office of the Ministry within the Church, these hold no priesthood differing in kind from that which is common to the Lord's people, and have no exclusive title to the preaching of the Gospel or to the care of souls. These ministries are shared with them by others, men and women. 'It is one and the same Spirit who does all this; as the Spirit wishes different gifts are given to each person' (2016a:12).

The distinction between the functions and offices of the laity and those set aside for ministry directed to the greater community is described by Attwell (2007:1-6) as follows:

> A distinction began to emerge between offices that were for the ordering of community life, the continuity of the apostolic tradition, the empowering of believers and the more general acts of mercy, evangelism, service, healing and renewal that belonged to the whole Church in its identification and continuity with the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ, God incarnate. The former offices were intended to be supportive of the greater work involved in the latter, hence Ephesians 4: 11-12. This greater work is the work of *ὁ* λάος, the laos, the People of God, who have come to be understood as 'The Laity' (2007:3).

The MCSA is emphatic that the clergy and the laity are to function as a unit and are dependent on one another. Moltmann (1992) describes their relationship as "a *genetic connection* with one another…. The differentiation can only be one of function, not of rank" (Moltmann 1992:305, 309), a description readily accepted by the MCSA.

As this study aims to answer the research question: have the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA been effectively adapted from our colonial past to our southern African context?, it is my understanding that the role of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is supported in southern African religion and culture and is not in conflict with either. Southern African culture and African spirituality set great store on the participation and involvement of every member of the community in the life of the community, whether sacred or secular, and for the benefit of the community as a whole. An example is the various roles given to persons in the preparation of the homecoming of those who have been through initiation school – different people are assigned to prepare the food and the drink, to cook the food and others to serve it. The role of each is highly valued in the preparation for and conducting of the homecoming of the men (Sifo 2019). A different example is from Zulu

culture where the head chief chooses an *izinduna*, an ambassador/spokesperson, and sends that person out to call the community to a community gathering at a specific venue. As the chief's messenger, this person carries the authority of the chief in delivering the message that will have an impact on the whole community.

The insights by Setiloane (1969) are helpful in understanding how, from an African perspective, the relationship between the individual and the community is essential for the well-being of both as he states: "A primary characteristic of African 'being' is its inclusiveness…. To be able to discern unity in multiplicity is a sophistication denied the Western mind and enquiry…. Personhood, being a human (Motho) is attainable only in community…. Christianity could be enriched immensely if it were to learn from African tradition about community: that it is of the very essence of being" (Setiloane 1969:37, 41).

In addition to the communal nature of African society, within southern African culture, the concept of *seriti* is an important one for "S*eriti* is the thing that forms the essentials of a human being…. *Seriti* in its definition is the ethico-religious and mystical or metaphysical qualities that emerge from modern and traditional society to promote the dignity of groups of people or an individual" (Rathete 2007:1). Setiloane (1986) explains that "'Participation' with its concomitant element of 'belonging' is made possible by 'seriti', which is ever engaged in interplay with other people's 'diriti' whenever they come into contact" (Setiloane 1986:14). As *seriti* provides identity and function while binding the community together, this is a concept that supports the communal and life-giving elements in the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

With the understanding that the element of the priesthood of all believers in the doctrine of ordination is supported in African culture, the question is whether or not this element requires further adaptations in our southern African context. My understanding is that this element does not require any further adaptations in the Africanisation of the doctrinal element of ordination, but an increase in the acceptance and implementation of the doctrine in the MCSA is required.

The practices of the Lay Presidents of the MCSA, past and present, regularly submitting articles to the New Dimension newspaper[133] articulating the role of the laity are commended as also are their conducting of seminars for the laity. The Lay Presidents also participate with the Presiding Bishop at events, seminars, conferences, consultations, Connexional

[133] One example is of the article by Mr Nkosi, 'The Church's vision on intentional involvement of laity in God's mission', published in the May 2018 edition of *New Dimension* 48(4):5.

Committees and serve on the Governing Council Executive of the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (MCSA 2019a:26-27). The intentions of the present Lay President, Mr Mabhalane Nkosi, as recorded in his report to Conference in 2018, are "to motivate the church at all levels to promote involvement of laity in various ministries working in partnership with clergy… [and] to empower laity to understand and implement the strategies that can enable mission in the church and community" (MCSA 2019a:25). Similar exposure of the lay leaders of every synod in the Connexion at synod and circuit levels also takes place.

However, the report by Mr Nkosi also records a "lack of commitment among some Districts and Circuits to introduce the concept of [the] implementation of Every Member Ministry model among their congregants" (2019a:27). His observation supports the premise that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is adequately incorporated into the doctrine of ordination but that it is the people, both clergy and laity, who need to be more firmly committed to accepting and implementing every member ministry in every circuit. His appeal for the ministry of the laity to enjoy greater exposure and participation is a timely reminder that presbyteral ministry is not the only ministry required in the MCSA and the Church of Christ.[134]

In summary, it may be concluded that the element of the valued participation of every member of the community in African culture is an ingredient that has not been sufficiently incorporated into the African cooking pot of ordination, resulting in the taste of the dish remaining very Western. In the light of the finding that the issue at stake is the commitment to and implementation of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, the MCSA needs to implement the proposal of the Lay President that "the church initiate research on the root causes of this [problem] and find a treatment regimen for it" (2019a:27). This proposal is made knowing that investigations and commissions may turn out to be little more than talk-shops but they are still important and require the attention of the denomination. It may even be that the MCSA should consider a form of sanction against circuits and superintendent ministers who insist on frustrating this theological imperative.[135]

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[134] An associated application that could be considered relates to the changing demographics in the Southern African countries comprising the MCSA arising from the diaspora of African people seeking better work opportunities or fleeing from persecution or ethnic strife in their own country. The matter to be considered is whether the MCSA has "attempted to assimilate or accommodate other nationalities" Musoni (2019:2-4) while remaining Methodist at heart. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is in this instance not referring to the complementary ministry of clergy and laity but the meaningful inclusion of African persons of other nationalities and their cultures into both the worship and ministry of the MCSA.

[135] This element, together with each of the following elements, needs to be investigated further in order to contribute to the Africanisation of ordination.

5.2 The presbytery

The ministry of the Christian Church is the continuation of that begun by Jesus Christ and "traces its beginnings to the Lord's commissioning of the Twelve (Mt 10:1-5, Mk 3:13-19, Lk 6:12-16) and the Seventy (Lk 10:1) to the work of the kingdom" (Cross & Livingstone (eds) 1974:1004). Following the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures attest to the ministry of Jewish and Gentile converts in establishing the Kingdom of God through their witness of a changed life (Acts 7), changed priorities (Acts 4:32-36 and Rm 12-15) and a concern for people in need (Acts 11:29). Oversight of the life and witness of the emerging community of believers progressed from the Twelve (Acts 2:14, 3:1-10, 4:23-31) with Peter assuming a leadership role (Acts 1-5, 10-11, 15), to a more formalised structure in place by the time of the holding of the Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts chapter 15, when the decision relating to the formal inclusion of Gentile persons into the Christian community was taken.

Scripture and church tradition recognise that from within the priesthood of all believers God calls some to be set aside to the ordained ministry within the Church of Christ. Examples of persons being set aside to specific roles and to positions of leadership include the appointment of the Seven (Acts 6:1-6), the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1-4) and of Timothy (1 Tm:14), all accompanied by the laying on of hands and prayer, the forerunner of the act of ordination by the laying on of hands. The understanding of the MCSA is that "[f]rom the beginning, certain persons were called and appointed to particular forms of ministry, of various kinds and for various purposes, but all directed towards the up building of the Church (1 Cor 12, Ephesians 5:11-16)" (MCSA 2016a:20).

The setting aside of persons within the Christian Church to a presbyteral role is in keeping with Scriptural teaching and the tradition inherited from the Early Church. In addition, Küng (1968) draws our attention to the fact that "[i]t is important to distinguish between the general power given to each individual Christian and the special authority given to individuals who have a public ministry within the community as a whole" (Küng 1968:439). In the words of Nürnberger (2016), "ordination does not transfer a special and indelible character, but entrusts ministers with a function. Their status is derived from that function" (Nürnberger 2016:331). Their understanding is supported by Wellings (2005:57-74), a Methodist theologian, who says that:

> all Christians are called to discipleship and that being and acting as a presbyter are particular forms of that calling. Within the ministry of the people of God, the ordained

> focus, express and represent the ministry of the whole. Presbyteral ministry encompasses word, sacrament and pastoral responsibility, exercised in the spirit of the servant ministry of Christ. Although many aspects of this ministry are shared with lay people and deacons, in combination the features are exclusive to and definitive of the presbyterate" (Wellings 2005:74).

The role of those set aside to the ordained ministry is that of "servant-leadership and discernment" (MCSA 2019a:2). They are called by God to equip and build up God's people, the whole church, for works of service in the world (Ephesians 4:11-12). Ordination is not in competition with baptism and "does not confer any higher dignity than baptism and merely gives specific form to the person's special call" (Moltmann 1992:314). In keeping with the doctrine that every baptised person shares in the ministry of Christ, the ordained fulfil their particular calling within the priesthood of all believers.

The justification for presbyters to function differently is that presbyters express, enable, and focus the ministry of the whole people of God while fulfilling their role of "the pastoral oversight of the People of God" (MCSA 2016a:20). For this reason, Grassow (2010:1-3) identifies the three primary functions of the ordained as:

- Participation in the ministry and mission of the Church as a disciple along with other disciples.
- Coordinating the other disciples in their worship and mission, as a primary focus of their vocation.
- Equipping all disciples for mission and worship (2010:1).

The reflection of Willimon (2002) is helpful as he states: "From the first, the church has leaders, not because it requires some special group of Christians to 'represent Christ', since baptism makes all Christians into Christ's representatives, but rather because the church needs a designated group of leaders to enable all the baptised to represent Christ to the world" (Willimon 2002:339).

Associated with the setting aside of persons to specific responsibilities by the Church, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles and the history of the early Church reflect an institutionalising of the Church with ordination setting apart those called by God and accepted by the Church to the Order of Ministry with a different role in ministry to the other Christ followers. The Roman practice of drawing a distinction "between the *ordo* (the senate) or *ordines* (when the *equites* were added) and the *plebs* or *populus romanus* (outside the capital, the decurions [Roman cavalry officers] constituted the *ordo*)" (Wainwright 1979:131) provided a model whereby the "secular distinction in dignity was transferred into the Church

when the language of *ordo* came to be applied analogously to the 'ordained ministry'" (1979:131). This should not surprise us as "[t]he Church of Christ does not exist in this world without an organization or structure that analogously resembles the organizations of other human societies" (Dulles 1974:8).

The formal structures of the Christian Church underwent various adaptations over the centuries. There emerged a threefold order of bishops, presbyters and deacons "in which the bishop was seen as the focus of unity, linking the local church to the Church universal of which he was the chief minister in each place" (MCSA 2016a:20). Willimon (2002), however, draws our attention to the fact that "[w]e search the New Testament in vain for much stress on the continuity of *structures* of Christian leadership. Continuity of faithful witness (2 Tm 2:2) is the main concern rather than continuity or uniformity of ecclesiastical structure" (Willimon 2002:29).[136] It is important to record, however, that "in Methodism, as in certain Reformation Churches, the threefold order of ministry was not retained, but we believe our pattern also to be in line with the teaching of the New Testament" (MCSA 2016a:20).

The MCSA believes that, while holding to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and a commitment to the principle of every member ministry, God calls some to be "ordained to this sole occupation and have a principal and directing part in these great duties" (MCSA 2016a:13). Significantly, early in the service of ordination (MCSA 2018d:1-11), the attention of the ordinands is drawn to the office to which they are called and to be ordained, with the Presiding Bishop declaring:

> Beloved in Christ, you are to be ordained into the Ministry of the Church of Jesus Christ. All Christians are called to share Christ's ministry of love and service for the healing and renewal of humanity and all creation. As ordained ministers you are called to share in this ministry of the whole Church in a particular way:
>
> By preaching and teaching the Word of God as expressed in Holy Scripture;
>
> By rightly administering the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion;
>
> By leading God's people in worship and prayer;
>
> By your counsel, direction and vision, giving order and purpose to the life of the congregation.
>
> For this Ministry, let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who took the form of a servant, humbled himself and became obedient to death (MCSA 2018d:4).

[136] See Küng 1968:393-413 for a detailed description of the development of a variety of different forms and structures within the early Christian Church.

What is clear is that the responsibilities of the ordained are primarily directed at the ordering of the life of the Church where "an essential function of the ordained ministry is 'oversight' or 'supervision' (for which the aid of the Spirit is also needed). One of the most important expressions of *episkopè* is the coordination of the individual service gifts for the edification of the total community" (Wainwright 1979:136).

The ministry of the ordained is, therefore, distinct from that of the laity. In the MCSA, ordination sets presbyters apart to the ministry of the "Word, Sacraments and the pastoral oversight of the People of God" (MCSA 2016a:20). The Methodist denomination, stemming from the time of Rev John Wesley, insists that the celebration of the sacraments of baptism[137] and Holy Communion, also known as the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, is restricted to the ordained. "Holy Communion is administered by an ordained Minister or by a Probationer duly authorised thereto" (MCSA 2016a:15). The celebration of the sacraments is, therefore, the function of ministry that differentiates the ministry of Methodist presbyters from that of the laity and those ordained to the Order of Deacons. The comment of Villa-Vicencio and Hulley (n.d.:1-32) helps clarify the office of a presbyter in stating that "Proclamation (of the Word) and the administration of the sacraments are therefore functions of the office to which persons are ordained" (Villa-Vicencio & Hulley n.d:23).

However, Methodism insists that for "the sake of Church Order and not because of any priestly virtue inherent in the office, the Ministers of the Church are set apart by ordination to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments" (MCSA 2016a:13). The church also insists that "though the ordained Minister has a different commission and authority from other members of the Laos, the distinction must not be overstressed" (2016a:21).

It is important to draw our attention to the fact that the MCSA also ordains Deacons by the laying on of hands and prayer to the ministry of Word and Service with the Presiding Bishop declaring: "Lord, send your Holy Spirit upon ……. for the office and work of a Deacon in the Church of Christ" (MCSA 2018d:7). Consequently, Deacons are not permitted to preside at the sacrament of Holy Communion, a matter that is presently receiving the attention of DEWCOM following numerous requests for Deacons to be granted a dispensation to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion in particular circumstances, in keeping with other Methodist connexions.[138]

[137] Lay persons are permitted to baptise in "exceptional circumstances of impending death when a Minister is not available" (MCSA 2016a:14).
[138] The *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (2016), section ¶328, refers.

As with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, it is my understanding that the doctrine of God calling and the MCSA setting individual persons aside for specific tasks of ministry within the doctrine of ordination is not at variance with southern African spirituality and culture. However, a similar finding is that the element remains very Western in its expression and requires an African emphasis and expression to be included in the ordination liturgy to bring an African flavour to the cooking pot.

Within southern African culture, while the community is of importance, individuals are recognised as fulfilling particular and essential roles, with their efforts contributing to the well-being of the greater community. Within Xhosa culture, as explained by Rev Sifo (2019), certain responsible persons are set aside to conduct specific rituals on behalf of the family or community. The nominated person to perform the ritual, the *intlabi*, is also given the tools; for example, the spear with which to slaughter the sacrificial animal at the specific occasion. Other examples are of the specific roles within a community of a *sangoma* (a traditional healer or diviner)[139] and an *inyanga*[140] in African traditional healing practices. These persons are widely consulted by the members of the community as their roles are deemed to be essential to the health and well-being of both the individual and the community.

With the understanding that this element in the doctrine of ordination is supported in African culture, the question is whether or not it requires further adaptation in our southern African context. It is my conviction that this particular element of the doctrine of the MCSA − setting individual people aside to a different function and for specific responsibilities within the ministry of the church − does not require any further adaptation in the Africanisation of the doctrinal element of ordination.

[139] A *sangoma* is a traditional healer or diviner (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sangoma).
[140] An *inyanga* is concerned mainly with medicines made from plants and animals, while a *sangoma* relies primarily on divination for healing (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional_healers_of_Southern_Africa).

5.3 Ordination by the laying on of hands and prayer

Having determined that, within the doctrine of the priesthood of believers, some baptised persons are set aside to be ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacraments, a more extensive explanation of the meaning and processes involved in the ordination of presbyters will follow.

The act of setting a presbyter apart to their office and work is by means of the ritual and rite of ordination. The *Book of Order* (2016a) describes ordination as:

> the act by which Christians are authorised by the Church to act in its name and on its behalf in certain ways. By the same act the ordained persons receive the grace of God in response to the prayers of the Church to enable them to fulfil the ministry to which they are ordained. In the Methodist Church they are set apart for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments and the pastoral oversight of the People of God.
>
> Because of its importance the rite of ordination has always been accompanied by certain outward signs, which have always included the laying on of hands with prayer. The ordaining Minister has been the one who best represents the fullness of the universal Church. In episcopal Churches the Minister of ordination has therefore all along been the Bishop. In the Methodist Church the ordination is authorised by Conference that represents the wider Church and is performed on its behalf by the Presiding Bishop and other presbyters. The ordained Minister is recognised as being ordained to the ministry of the Church of God, and not simply of the Methodist Church (2016a:20).

Cragg (1969:1-10) provides a helpful description of the meaning of ordination from a Methodist perspective as follows:

> Ordination by the laying on of hands involves the formal recognition by the Church of a divine call and a divine gift or charisma; admission into an order of ministry within the Church, and authorisation to exercise its functions as a representative of the Church; and prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit to fulfil that ministry, in the confident expectation that the gift will be bestowed. The process leading to ordination involves the whole People of God and not simply a particular order within the People (1969:9).[141]

In the MCSA, ordination incorporates the essential elements of the Conference granting the Presiding Bishop permission to conduct the ordination by the laying on of hands and a prayer to the Holy Spirit, the presentation of a Bible and a Certificate of Ordination and the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion. These elements, except for the presentation of a certificate, can be traced back to the early centuries and are, for example, expressed in the liturgy for the Ordination of Bishops and Elders recorded in *The Apostolic*

[141] Another description is that of Küng (1968) describing ordination as "the giving of authority and commissioning of particular members for a particular service, effected by the laying-on of hands, which serves as a public legitimation of the minister and his endowing with the charism needed for his ministry" (Küng 1968:405).

Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome (Edgecomb n.d.:1-5), dating to early in the third century, approximately 215CE. The prayer to the Holy Spirit, as recorded by Hippolytus, is worded as: "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, look upon your servant here, and impart the spirit of grace and the wisdom of elders, that he may help and guide your people with a pure heart, just as you looked upon your chosen people, and commanded Moses to choose elders, whom you filled with your spirit which you gave to your attendant" (Edgecomb n.d.:4).

The prayer of the Presiding Bishop while hands are laid on each ordinand by previously ordained presbyters is: "Lord, send your Holy Spirit upon …….., for the office and work of a Minister in the Church of Christ" (MCSA 2018d:5).

The significance of the prayer to the Holy Spirit, an *epiclesis*, is that "all Christian ministry is and remains dependent on the Spirit's empowerment" (Wainwright 1979:135) with Willimon (2002) declaring that: "Ordination is a gift of God, to be sure, but a gift of God through the church, for the church, that the church might be the church of God" (Willimon 2002:18). The understanding of the MCSA, as recorded in the *Book of Order* (2016a), is that "the ordained persons receive the grace of God in response to the prayers of the Church to enable them to fulfil the ministry to which they are ordained" (MCSA 2016a:20).

The insight of Macquarrie (1977) is significant in determining that these visible acts of laying on hands and prayer "stress the office, rather than the man [sic] or his personality. What he does is not done by his own power or his own virtue. He acts by authority of the Church and in the name of God" (Macquarrie 1977:429).

I find it noteworthy that Willimon (2002) links the laying on of hands at ordination with baptism, stating: "Though most of us today associate the laying on of hands with ordination, it is *a baptismal gesture*. When used in ordination, the laying on of hands is a sign that the call to ministry is preceded by the baptismal call and arises out of the general ministry of all Christians in baptism" (Willimon 2002:48-49).

While it is the Presiding Bishop who utters the prayer to the Holy Spirit in the act of ordination, it is the Conference which authorises the Presiding Bishop to ordain each presbyter (MCSA 2018c:2), bearing in mind that the Conference comprises both clergy and lay persons. Cragg (1963) expands on the role of Conference in the authorisation of a presbyter to be ordained by showing that "Conference is representative of the Church, and the ministry of the Word and Sacraments is one of these ministries which Christ has given through His Spirit to the Church as a whole" (Cragg 1963:5). The concept that it is the

Conference that ordains would not be a foreign one in the Methodist doctrine of ordination. Support for this premise is contained in the ordination service, with the General Secretary stating: "Presiding Bishop, the people of God through the Conference have expressed their approval by declaring the Ordinands worthy to be ordained, and the Ordinands have satisfactorily answered the questions put before them. I invite you on behalf of the Church to ordain them to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament" (MCSA 2018d:5).

The laying on of hands and the prayer to the Holy Spirit are fundamental to understanding the ordination of a presbyter. As Willimon points out: "There is in this gesture a conferral of power and authority from those who have borne this burden to those newly called to lead. Any authority and power that clergy have is never their own; it is a gift, a bestowal from the Holy Spirit and the church" (Willimon 2002:48).[142]

The laying on of hands is conducted by presbyters who are themselves ordained persons in the Church of Christ, remembering that the MCSA understands the concept of apostolic succession differently from some Christian denominations. Methodist ecclesiology understands apostolic succession as the "continuity with the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles. It is succession in the faith, witness, life and commission of the apostles and thus belongs to the Church as a whole and not to any group within it. It means standing in the same tradition of ministry as the apostles and that the authority to minister is given by Christ himself, rather than human hands" (MCSA 2002:15).

In support of this view, Moltmann (1992) declares that "[t]he power and the command of apostolic succession belongs to the church as a whole and with it to every individual member for the ministry in which he is placed through the gift of the Spirit…. It is only in fulfilling the mission itself that the church can be called apostolic" (Moltmann 1992:312). In support of this view, Küng (1968) draws our attention to the fact that "[t]he Church is the successor of the apostles in obedience, and from this obedience it derives its authority" (Küng 1968:356).

Associated with the laying on of hands, each ordinand is presented with a Bible and a Certificate of Ordination (MCSA 2018b) while the Presiding Bishop declares: "Take authority for the office and work of a minister in the Church of Christ" (MCSA 2018d:5). Ordination is the means whereby the Conference, through the Presiding Bishop, grants authority to the presbyter "to act in its name and on its behalf" (MCSA 2016a:20). The Conference confers its authority on a presbyter to preside and fulfil the ministry as Christ's

[142] See also Macquarrie 1977:427-430.

representative while being under the direction of − as well as being obedient and accountable to − the Conference.

A consequence of presbyters being in Full Connexion with the Conference is that the Conference has the discretion and powers to withdraw that authority from the presbyter. The ordination of the presbyter to minister in the Church of Christ is not called into question, only their authority to function as a presbyter of the MCSA. There is a similar understanding when a presbyter resigns from being in Full Connexion with the Conference.

The authority granted at ordination to function as a presbyter of the MCSA has limitations that are determined by the Conference. Two examples will be cited. The first is that, while the MCSA does not discriminate as to who can be ordained on the grounds of their gender or sexual orientation, the Conference limits the authority granted to presbyters to fulfil their pastoral responsibilities to persons in a same-sex relationship. The MCSA prohibits a clergy person from conducting Civil Unions of members from the LGBTIQ community and does not permit its presbyters to enter into a Civil Union. The implications of these decisions are discussed more fully in Chapter 6, section 6.4.

A second example is that the MCSA has placed a restriction on the maximum age at which a person may be a candidate for the ordained ministry, declaring that "[n]o candidate aged 50 or beyond in the year of acceptance will be accepted" (MCSA 2019a:193). This decision was taken to ensure a reasonable tenure of ministry as a presbyter following their formation and ordination before their compulsory retirement at age 65 (MCSA 2016a:42).

In summary, the elements pertaining to the doctrine of ordination include that it is the Conference that authorises the ordination by the Presiding Bishop and previously ordained persons. The ordination occurs in a ceremony that includes worship and ritual with the laying on of hands, prayer and the gift of a Bible and certificate to each newly ordained person. Ordination places the presbyter under the authority of and makes them accountable to the annual Conference. It is my understanding that these elements relating to the doctrine of ordination are not discordant with southern African culture and spirituality.

With this understanding, the question is whether or not these doctrinal elements require further adaptation in our southern African context for an appropriate Africanised doctrine of ordination. The conclusion being drawn is that these elements do not require any further adaptation in the Africanisation project, except in relation to the unbridled authority of the Conference of the MCSA.

The examples cited in this chapter, together with those referred to in Chapter 4, section 4.3.2.1, raise the question of the appropriateness of the supreme authority of Conference in our southern African context. It is my conviction that this element has not been sufficiently Africanised in the light of the concepts of holism and vitalism in African culture which strive for the well-being and balance of both the individual and the community in order to impart life forces to the community (Richardson 2009:46).

The literature indicates that, while some political and ecclesiastical leaders in Africa believe that they have absolute powers "adopting a kingship model of leadership and its associated nuances" (Magezi 2015:2), the dominant understanding is that the authority of those in leadership "is derived from the people. Even though the king has supreme authority, the system encourages checks and balances and separation of power between the traditional rulers and the kingmakers" (2015:3). Mtshiselwa (2017:403-420) draws our attention to the fact that unbridled authority by persons in power is not acceptable as seen in the Zulu proverb "*Inkosi yinkosi ngabantu* 'A chief is a chief through his subjects' to denounce ingratitude and the act of belittling other people which often manifests in people with power" (Mtshiselwa 2017:415). It is my contention that the proverb should apply to the MCSA when not acting according to southern African cultural principles. Van der Wiel (2012) also records that in Northern Sotho culture, the manner of resolving conflicts and problems is by means of a gathering of "all the men of the *kgoro* (village) at the meeting place" (van der Wiel 2012:22) where the *rakgoro* (father of the village) does not make decisions alone but seeks the counsel of the men with the intention of coming to an amicable solution (2012:22).

For the African model of ordination to be effectively adapted from our colonial past, additional measures need to be introduced to amend the absolute powers invested in the Conference. The potential for and experience of some presbyters is that the decisions taken by the Conference and of the Presiding Bishop when acting on behalf of the Conference (MCSA 2016a:57) are autocratic and without recourse to review. Processes that would hold officials of the Conference and the Conference accountable for their decisions need to be developed, as do processes that allow for an appeal or review of decisions already taken.

Methodist presbyters are not employees of the MCSA, a relationship confirmed in various South African Courts of Law,[143] and are not able to appeal to the Commission for

[143] The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), in the case of *C Wentzel v The Methodist Church of South Africa* (GAJB 18127–10 [2011]), upheld the submission of the MCSA that the CCMA that was not in a position to hear matters regarding the employment status of ministers. A similar

Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration regarding what they experience as unfair labour practices. Methodist presbyters are not permitted to turn to the courts for relief but are required to follow the internal rules and processes of the MCSA. The proposal is, therefore, that the Conference develops measures whereby those who feel aggrieved can make representation to the Secretary of Conference for a decision to be reviewed by an independent panel within the structures of the MCSA. This proposal would assist in the amended Africanised model being more appropriate for our southern African context in the 21st century.

5.4 Being received into Full Connexion with the Conference

The Methodist doctrine of ordination cannot stand apart from presbyters being received into Full Connexion[144] and entering into a covenantal relationship with the Conference. Following their ordination, the General Secretary leads the assembly in the liturgy relating to Reception into Full Connexion (MCSA 2018d:1-11) that explains the meaning and implications of being in Full Connexion and a covenantal relationship. The liturgy then continues with the Presiding Bishop receiving the newly ordained presbyters into Full Connexion stating:

> After due examination of your call and ministry, and your Ordination, we now welcome you to this communion. You have given assurance of your faith and Christian experience. You have made the vows of ordination, committing yourself to accept and uphold faithfully the doctrine, liturgy, and discipline of the Methodist Church.
>
> We rejoice that you have been called to serve among us, and pray that God may guide your ministry. We now receive you as a Minister/Deacon in Full Connexion in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (2018d:9).

A detailed description of the relationship between ordination and Full Connexion is described in the ordination liturgy as follows (MCSA 2018d:1-11):

> The Methodist Conference ordains Ministers (Presbyters) to exercise a ministry of Word, Sacrament and pastoral responsibility in and on behalf of the church universal, and so also Deacons to the Ministry of Word and Service. At the same time it receives into Full Connexion with itself those who are called to exercise their ministry through the Methodist Church in an Itinerant capacity. They are thereby constituted as a body of ministers who enter a covenant relationship with the Conference. At the heart of this mutual relationship both the ministers and the Conference have appropriate privileges and responsibilities. Under the will of God and their obedience to it, the ministers are

judgment was handed down by the Supreme Court of Appeal in the case of *Ecclesia de Lange v The presiding bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa* (726/13) [2014] ZASCA 151 that upheld the submission of the Presiding Bishop that the Conference is the final authority of the MCSA and that any challenges should be determined in terms of the internal rules, policies and doctrines of the MCSA.

[144] The concept of being accepted into Full Connexion is discussed more fully in Chapter 2, sections 2.2.2-2.2.4.

> accountable to the Conference for the exercise of their ministry and for their execution of the Conference's vision and will. At the same time the Conference is committed to stationing them all appropriately to available stations and to providing them with the resources and support necessary for them to fulfil their ministry. As people who represent the Conference, all Methodist ministers who are ordained and in Full Connexion share a collegial responsibility for embodying, exercising and sharing with others (lay and ordained) in the courts of the church and elsewhere, the Conference's oversight of the church's engaging in worship and mission, both as it gathers in Christian community and as it disperses in the world.
>
> All Methodist ministers who are ordained and in Full Connexion are called to respond wherever they are most required (in the collective view of the Church expressed through the Conference) to meet those same needs. They are therefore stationed as individuals to enact this collegial responsibility. To this end they are all stationed by the Conference (2018d:8-9).

Being in Full Connexion defines the relationship of the presbyter with the body called the Conference of the MCSA, not the Church of Christ. Being ordained authorises the baptised person to minister in the Church of Christ whereas being in Full Connexion authorises the presbyter of the MCSA to "perform the work of a Minister in the Circuits and to administer the Sacraments" (MCSA 2016a:37), under the authority of and being accountable to the Conference. The MCSA, in turn, is committed to providing "the care and protection of Conference especially in regard to the provision of opportunities of service in the Circuits" (2016a:37) and to provide the support and resources for that ministry to take place.

In practice, however, this leads to some complications, one of which is the consequence of a presbyter being stationed by Conference to a poor circuit and then not receiving their stipend, a matter that is dealt with in Chapter 6, section 6.4. In spite of the complications, the MCSA continues to hold together in tension the two elements of ordination and reception into Full Connexion.

The concept of being received into Full Connexion with the Conference and other presbyters in the Order of Presbyters is not inconsistent with southern African culture where an individual is incorporated into a community with the intention of supporting both the well-being of the community and that of the individual. The implications of this premise, as described by Ketshabile (2012), are helpful in relation to the concept of presbyters entering into Full Connexion with the Conference. He states:

> Western Christian theology lays much more emphasis on individual conversion and accountability before God and the theology of a new people of God (or the church). In African Traditional religion, particularly Batswana religion, the emphasis is on community and not the individual. The implication of this is that the individual cannot exist outside the community and in turn community does not refer to the living only,

> irrespective of whether they are Christian or not. It refers to both those in the present life and those who have departed (Ketshabile 2012:187).

The meaning of being received into Full Connexion is implicit in African culture with the understanding that "Community has to do with our relationship to other human beings. It is in community that our *uMunthu* is actualized as an inseparable and yet individuated *Munthu*. Therefore, human identity has a communal dimension" (Musopole 1998:28). Equally important is the belief in African culture that "physical death is not the cessation of existence" (Oladipo 2006:171) and on death the departed are welcomed into the community as the living dead. In addition, the understanding of family in African culture includes the nuclear family, the extended family, the departed relatives (the living dead) and the unborn members in the loins of the living (Mbiti 1969:106). The significance of being received into and belonging to a community, whether from a cultural or presbyteral perspective, is that this incorporation brings with it both privilege and responsibility. When a man has been initiated and accepted into manhood, "he has the knowledge that he will be recognised and accepted as a man wherever he goes and will be granted the applicable courtesies and status while expected to fulfil his role and responsibilities in the greater community" (Sifo 2019).

These concepts in southern African culture align with the concept of being accepted into the family of the Order of Presbyters on being received into Full Connexion with the Conference. In the light of this conclusion, does this element require further adaptation for an Africanised doctrine of ordination? I am persuaded that these elements do not require any further adaptation in the Africanisation of the doctrinal element of ordination, except in one respect: expanding the understanding of those who are in Full Connexion with the Conference.

What is a new understanding, and an important one for the further Africanisation of the doctrine of ordination, however, is that being received into Full Connexion must be expanded to include not only those presently serving in the Order of Presbyters but also those who have gone before, the living dead in African culture. This developed understanding must also be included in the liturgy of the ordination service. The proposal is that DEWCOM be tasked to investigate and make the appropriate proposals for inclusion of this broader understanding in the description of Full Connexion in the *Book of Order* (2016a) and for inclusion in the liturgy of the ordination service.

5.5 Celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion

The final act in the ordination service is that of celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion, termed "The Lord's Supper" (MCSA 2018d:10-11) in the liturgy of the *Ordination Service* (2018d:1-11). This practice is also recorded in the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome (Edgecomb n.d.:3).

Celebrating the sacrament is a statement to each ordinand that this is the expression of ministry that differentiates them from other baptised persons in the Church of Christ but, more importantly, serves as a declaration "of Christ making himself present in his Church" (Macquarrie 1977:449) through the sacrament. These elements are at the heart of the presbyteral ministry.

The link that Moltmann (1992) makes between baptism and the celebration of Holy Communion is an important one in the context of the service of ordination and is not sufficiently stressed in the Methodist doctrine of ordination, particularly in the light of southern African culture, and needs to be quoted at length, namely:

> Just as baptism is the eschatological *sign of starting out*, valid once and for all, so the regular and constant fellowship at the table of the Lord is the eschatological *sign of being on the way*. If baptism is called a unique *sign of grace*, then the Lord's supper must be understood as the repeatable *sign of hope*. Baptism and the Lord's supper belong essentially together and are linked with one another in the messianic community. In the baptismal event the community is linked to the individual who enters the fellowship of Christ and confesses it publicly. In eating and drinking at the Lord's table individuals are linked to the community which is visible in these acts. Baptism and the Lord's supper are the signs of the church's life, because they are the signs of the one who *is* their life" (1992:243).

The association between the two rites, the two sacraments, which determine the office of a presbyter, need to be developed and introduced into an Africanised liturgy that incorporates the significance and celebration of the rites of passage in southern African culture. This proposal needs to be investigated by DEWCOM and the required adaptations referred to the Conference for their approval.

It is, therefore, my contention that there is no reason to believe that the doctrinal element of the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion is in conflict with African culture and does not need further adaptation. However, the significance of the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion at the ordination service should be enhanced with the introduction of practices from an African cultural perspective into the service and after the

service. These proposals will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6, section 6.2.3, dealing with the Africanisation of the practices relating to ordination.

5.6 Conclusion

The discussion in Chapters 2-5 indicates that the doctrine of ordination, by being decolonised and Africanised, has adapted to become more inclusive with the abolition of ethnicity in the classification of clergy persons, their formation, ordination, stationing and their appointment to circuits. Black clergy are now elected to positions of leadership and accountability. A unified Ministerial and Representative Session of Synod is held together with the renewed relevance of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers for both clergy and laity to minister simultaneously yet distinctly. The exclusion of women candidating for the ministry has been abolished and the reluctance to elect and appoint women presbyters to positions of leadership is being corrected within all the structures of the church.

In addition to the specific amendment to the doctrine of ordination allowing for the inclusion of women as presbyters, other doctrinal amendments specifically relating to ordination have been made, all of which are consistent with southern African culture and spirituality. These include probationer ministers being permitted to preside at the celebration of the sacraments on condition that they have been duly authorised (MCSA 2016a:17); the introduction of the description of the nature of the relationship between the MCSA and a presbyter as a covenantal relationship (EMMU 2001:1-2) and not a contractual relationship (MCSA 2016a:30); and presbyters of other recognised denominations participating in the laying on of hands at the ordination service (MCSA 1991:31). A recent amendment to the doctrine of ordination is that the assessment of the worthiness of an ordinand to be ordained has moved from the ordination service to the service of the *Preparation for Reception into Full Connexion* (MCSA 2018c:1-3) conducted during the sitting of the Conference. Another is the introduction of the Presbyters' Convocation that is held prior to and which reports to each synod. The Presbyters' Convocation is different from the previously held Ministerial Sessions of Synod, and deals with matters pertaining to the vocation of the clergy; engagement with contemporary theological/doctrinal/ethical issues; disciplinary matters; the oral examination of ordinands and the reaffirmation by all presbyters of their ordination vows and undertakings made when they candidated and were ordained (MCSA 2018a:93). The Convocation then reports to the synod for any decisions that may be required.

An important element of the Convocation is that presbyters, in keeping with African Christian humanism, are being re-humanised through their relationships in the Order of Presbyters. Forster (2019:1-20) compares the concept of shared humanity as relationships in African culture with the relationships between presbyters in the Order of Presbyters when he states: "In other words, our theological conviction in a shared humanity, presents us with an ethical responsibility – because we are human, we bear responsibility for one another…because we share one another's humanity, we are not only to recognize it, but also to work towards re-humanizing others, and in turn also re-humanizing ourselves" (Forster 2019:15). This view is supported by Dube (2016:1-10) who notes that "health among Batswana, and in most Southern African communities, is closely associated with healthy relationships and interconnectedness" (Dube 2016:3).

An additional element that has been included into the liturgy of the colonial ordination service (MethSA 1936:134-154) is the "[r]ecognition of our common ministry and reaffirmation of baptism" (MCSA 2018d:2) which places ordination to the presbyterate within the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Another is the involvement of the Lay President in the liturgy of the ordination service but not in the laying on of hands during the ordination of the presbyters (2018d:1-11).

This chapter has critiqued the doctrine of ordination in the MCSA by examining each element contained in the liturgy of the ordination service (MCSA 2018d:1-11) and determined that each doctrinal element is congruent with southern African culture and spirituality. The question to be answered is, if this is how the doctrine of ordination is presently understood and practised in the MCSA, has it been sufficiently Africanised to our southern African context? In summary, my understanding is that, while the elements of the doctrine are not at variance with aspects of southern African culture, they remain essentially colonial and are not sufficiently African in character and expression. The ingredients being placed into the African cooking pot are predominantly grown in Europe with the limited addition of ingredients grown in African soil.

What could make the difference in the Africanisation of ordination? What needs to happen? The MCSA needs to investigate and implement the adaptations proposed in the conclusions of sections 5.1-5.5 of this chapter. These proposals include an increased acceptance and promotion of the ministry of lay persons in keeping with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers; curtailing the authority of the Conference of the MCSA with special reference to the itinerant stationing of presbyters; lifting the restrictions on presbyters in a same-sex

relationship entering into a Civil Union; and expanding the understanding of Full Connexion to include the living dead. Additional proposals include the reintroduction of the participation by the Lay President in the laying on of hands at ordination, in keeping with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers;[145] and enriching the meaning of the sacrament of Holy Communion at the ordination service.[146]

Extensive work needs to be undertaken by African scholars to mine the depths of meaning in our southern African and African cultures and then to analyse and incorporate these aspects using an African narrative, leading to an African expression of ordination. This approach is clearly expressed by Musopole (1998:7-47):

> There is [a] need to reflect on our African way of life so as to discover those fundamental principles upon which it is based. However, one needs to be cautious in the way that reflection takes place. Since most of us have been trained in western ways of reflection, we tend to impose on the African way western canons of thought and end up seeing African reality as if it were western reality. African reflection calls for new epistemological approaches that would lead to discovering African reality (1998:46).

As the cries for the decolonisation and Africanisation of ordination were directed at both the doctrine and the practices related to ordination, Chapter 6 will focus on how Africanising the practices of ordination would provide the greatest opportunities for Africanising ordination in the MCSA.

[145] The proposals in this regard will be discussed in Chapter 6, section 6.2.6
[146] The proposals in this regard will be discussed in Chapter 6, section 6.2.3

Chapter 6

Africanising the practices relating to ordination

The Africanising of elements of the doctrine of ordination were examined in Chapter 5 together with proposals to further Africanise the doctrinal elements. This chapter will examine the practices arising from the doctrine of ordination and propose how Africanising these practices will provide the greatest opportunities in the Africanising of ordination. The conclusion drawn from the discussion in Chapters 2-5 was that, while the practices relating to ordination have been adapted to become more applicable to our African context, the dominant narrative remains close to the colonial model and does not express the richness of our southern African culture. Chapter 4, section 4.3, indicates that the inclusion of elements from southern African culture would offer significant ingredients to Africanise the practices associated with ordination. The MCSA could draw from the African emphases on humanism, holism, vitality and communalism, aspects of African leadership and governance, the role of ritual, symbolism and ceremonies and the relevance of African feminism.

The premise of this chapter is that applying aspects of our southern African culture and spirituality to the practices of ordination will assist in further adapting ordination from our colonial past to our southern African context. Sections 6.1-6.2 will indicate those practices requiring further Africanisation and how the ingredients being grown in our African soil would contribute significantly to the Africanisation project when placed into the cooking pot. Thereafter, in sections 6.3-6.5, important aspects relating to an Africanised model of ordination and its practices will be discussed.

6.1 Institutional culture and dominant epistemology

The institutional culture and dominant narrative of the MCSA remain Western and the ethos does not reflect the cultural diversity and the plurality of beliefs and customs of the people of southern Africa. These narratives must be transformed for the new model to be more strongly African. Examples of how an African epistemology will positively contribute to the Africanising of the practices of ordination in the MCSA will be presented.

The Africanisation of ordination requires the adoption of an African epistemology and methodology in the screening and selection of candidates for the ministry of Word and Sacraments. The present methodology and criteria by which candidates are screened and selected remain very Western at both circuit and synod level. The required CQM[147] assessment of Prospective Candidates (EMMU 2019a:1-2) form provides an extensive framework for assessing the suitability of a prospective candidate for the ordained ministry. The prescribed criteria include the Spiritual Character, Vocational Readiness, Academic Potential, Overall Maturity and Attitude, Interpersonal / Social Skills, Discipline and Responsibility and the Personal Bearing and Conduct of the candidate. The CQM is then to answer the specific question: "Would the members of the CQM be glad to receive the person as the minister of their congregation?" (2019b:2).

While the need for information in testing a candidate's call to the ordained ministry of Word and Sacraments is essential, the concern is that this assessment is very Western. Many of the questions could be answered with a "yes" or "no" and there is little provision made for an intensive report and evaluation by the local community of the prospective candidate to either the Circuit Quarterly Meeting or the Synod. An Africanised model must include the increased role of the local community in the selection processes of a candidate. The criteria by which a candidate is to be assessed and the contribution of the community in that assessment will now be examined.

There must be a clearer understanding of the criteria, from an African perspective, for the screening, selection and acceptance of candidates. This amended requirement was clearly set out by Rev Nyobole (2018b) who says that the MCSA needs to "determine the kind of instruments we want to use to test that call. We need to determine what it is that we are looking for and whether that will be determined by our Western or African ideas" (Nyobole 2018b).

[147] CQM is the Circuit Quarterly Meeting that processes the application and forwards their recommendation to the Education for Ministry and Mission Unit for their approval.

The difference between the Western and African assessment criteria is clarified by Nyobole (2018b) who notes that "in our Western way, things like visions and dreams are not seen as valid in articulating that call" (Nyobole 2018b). Black candidates are required to express their faith journey and call to the ministry in a foreign cultural environment, in a language and idiom that is not their own and who, as verbalised by Abrahams (2018), "stop short in saying this is the ancestors speaking to them. They dress it up in more respectable language. It is almost as if they want to appease our captivity to the Western model. There is no 'coming out' so to speak" (Abrahams 2018). In order for the candidates to express themselves more freely, an additional consideration is that, should they so choose, they be permitted to present their conversion and call to the ministry in their mother tongue with translation into English.

The defining of the criteria for selection and acceptance from an African and not only a Western perspective, together with candidates being permitted to give their testimony in the language of their choice, will enable a more just and humane assessment to be made by the courts of the church as to the suitability of a candidate for the presbyteral ministry.

The concept in southern African culture of the community educating and bringing life to the individual within the community should also be incorporated into the assessment of a prospective candidate. An intensive report and evaluation by the greater community of the prospective candidate's readiness, suitability and maturity should be a requirement for submission to both the Circuit Quarterly Meeting and the Synod.

The role of the greater community was raised by respondents during the interviews with Bishop Mntambo suggesting that, in a similar manner to that in which the community affirms the call of persons to become traditional healers, particularly as a *sangoma*, the synod needs to hear how the local community affirms the personal call of a candidate for the ministry. "The voice of the people needs to be heard and synod needs to assess how the community have affirmed that call" (Mntambo 2018). His view is supported by Nyobole (2018b) who asserts that "the communal testing of the call is equally important" (Nyobole 2018b).

The role of the community should also extend to their input of the ordinands during the year of their ordination. A suggestion by Rev Molo (2018) is that the voice and input of the community should be integrated into the formation of presbyters during the retreat which is conducted for a week prior to their ordination. His proposal is that the ordinands should be taken to the local churches in the area of their upcoming ordination to hear from the local churches "what they believe should be the role of ministers in their lives as happens in the

African tradition of me going to the mountain where different people come to tell me what it means to be a man…. We need to allow the community to speak to the ordinands" (Molo 2018).

The voice of the greater community also needs to be heard more clearly regarding the "worthiness" of an ordinand to be ordained. This is in addition to the evaluation of the Probationer Mentoring Committee consisting of "five (5) people including Leaders of the Society/Section/Circuit along with a Minister with whom the Probationer is working" (MCSA 2018a:201), the April Circuit Quarterly Meeting and the District Synod (2018a:202). Once again, the *CQM Recommendation to Synod* form (EMMU 2019b) that is signed by the Superintendent Minister and Circuit Stewards makes no provision for the specific evaluation and affirmation of the worthiness of the ordinand for ordination by the greater community. The Circuit Quarterly Meeting, Synod and Conference need to hear whether the people can say "[w]e trust this person to be our leader, our shepherd among us" (Mntambo 2018). In the African culture, a person may declare that they are qualified to serve as a *sangoma* but it is the community which will confirm that call saying, "now that's a good *sangoma*" (2018).

The institutional culture and dominant epistemology of the MCSA are to be more strongly African and not discriminate in the selection processes against the indigenous candidates. An Africanised model, therefore, needs to utilise criteria familiar to African culture in the selection of candidates for the ordained ministry as well as in the assessment of the worthiness of an ordinand to be ordained. The Conference could task the Education for Ministry and Mission Unit (EMMU) to investigate and propose an amended process for the selection of candidates for the ministry; the examination of their call to the presbyteral ministry; their formation; as well as the assessment of their readiness for ordination.

A significant contribution to Africanising our institutional culture and dominant epistemology needs to take place at the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS) in Pietermaritzburg. As has been indicated in Chapter 4, section 4.4, presbyters are formed at SMMS using a Western curriculum and a Western methodology dominated by a Western epistemology. The environment in which presbyters are formed faces the challenge of the paucity of published material from an African perspective. This limits sources of information and perpetuates a Western epistemology. The MCSA needs, as a matter of urgency and importance, to encourage black theologians to publish material to be used in developing an African epistemology during the formation of our presbyters.

In addition, SMMS is encouraged to investigate and propagate African philosophies, African ways of thinking theologically and African ways of teaching. The seminarians also need to be taught about the dangers and consequences of theologies of exclusion and oppression. The production of theological material relevant to our African context must investigate the contributions of the teachings, beliefs and practices of African spirituality, the emphases on holism, vitalism and communality in African culture, of African Independent Churches and of African Christianity. The cultural diversity and plurality of beliefs and customs of the diversity of people of southern Africa must also receive the appropriate incorporation into the formation of seminarians for an effective ministry in our African context. In addition, it is imperative that everyone involved in the formation of the seminarians understands our African context in order to contextualise our theology.

A particular field of research to be included in the curriculum is that of African feminism with specific reference to the interpretation and understanding of Scripture from a feminist position. This relates to the challenges and circumstances faced by women clergy.

Integral to the adoption of an African narrative at SMMS, and accordingly into the broader MCSA, is the necessity for all seminarians to have a working knowledge of an African language in order to understand how people communicate among themselves. Competency in an African language should, therefore, be considered as a pre-requisite for ordination and such a proposal needs to be considered by the Conference.

An area of concern requiring the attention of SMMS and the Conference relates to the exit outcome of seminarians from SMMS. The Mission Statement of SMMS reads that its goal is: “To form transforming leaders for church and nation by providing the spiritual formation, academic and practical training required to develop skilled Methodist ministers of integrity, faithfulness and excellence” (SMMS 2018:1). However, a perception among some, but not all, presbyters and persons in leadership positions is that SMMS is producing ministers who are aggressive and who have a sense of entitlement and a desire for riches, status and power without an equal commitment to servant leadership.

These sentiments were also conveyed by Rev Paul (2018)[148] in our interview stating:

> They come out [from SMMS] with a sense of 'I have got it'. I don't think that we are producing shepherds. There is a sense of entitlement. Our entitlement begins when we slaughter the sheep – when we slaughter the flock. The thinking is that the flock is there for our own benefit. And then slaughtering them with our teaching that is above their understanding. They have not heard the Word of God but have heard this learned person. We have got to produce people who can synchronise the head and the heart. At the moment we are working from the head and have missed the link between the head and the heart (Paul 2018).

As the formation of presbyters prior to their ordination is the task of SMMS and the evaluation of the outcomes of the seminarians is questioned by some, it is proposed that an evaluation of these narratives and the outcomes desired by the MCSA must be undertaken by SMMS in conjunction with EMMU. Changes to the formation programmes at SMMS need to be developed in order to achieve the required outcomes. The statement by Banda and Senokoane (2009:207-245)) that "in traditional African thinking leadership, religion, and the community are all intertwined within a collective whole" (Banda & Senokoane (2009:216) is a timeous one in the formation of presbyters for an Africanised model of ordination.

But what happens after ordination to ensure that our institutional culture remains strongly African? The MCSA has recently introduced initiatives in this regard. The first is the decision of the Conference to implement "the Continuing Ministerial Formation programme and directs EMMU to facilitate implementation" (MCSA 2018a:94). This programme requires each presbyter in active ministry "to do at least 100 hours of learning/study a year (about 12 days) in the areas of choice" (2018a:94). EMMU is tasked to implement the Continuing Ministerial Formation programme as well as "to identify and propose preferred institutions and programmes" (2018a:95). It would be in the interests of the MCSA that one of the electives relates specifically to the Africanisation of the MCSA by including courses in African theology, languages, liturgy and spirituality. A proposal in this regard, together with the proposal that competency in an African language is considered as a pre-requisite for ordination, needs to be presented to EMMU for their consideration and adoption.

[148] I am using a pseudonym in order to protect the person. The person's name is known to me and has given permission to use this quotation. From here on this person will be referred to as Paul (2018).

The second initiative is one which has been neglected in the past decades but has now been re-introduced, namely the requirement that every presbyter is to be part of an accountability group[149] in order to "carry out a Review of Ministry process" (MCSA 2018a:94) twice every year. "The aim of the review is to help a minister identify her/his strengths, passion, gifts, and how these contribute to the wellbeing of the circuit/society/community of the church at large as well as areas of weakness in which s/he needs development/empowerment. This process will assist ministers in choosing areas of study to focus each year" (2018a:94-95). A mentorship report on each presbyter is tabled at the annual Presbyters' Convocation.

The third initiative is the introduction of regional Superintendents' consultations where "The Consultations will, we trust, help in building our collective ministry and understanding of mission locally…" (Morgan 2019:19). Superintendent Ministers will now be required to implement ministries for mission within their circuits in collaboration with "the Office of the Presiding Bishop, The Education for Ministry and Mission Unit, Mission Unit and the Bishops" (2019:19).

The fourth initiative is the recently published document 'Principles Guiding the Presbyters' Conduct in the MCSA' (MCSA 2019a:123-126) requiring every presbyter to "be exemplary in:

- Actively living as disciples of Christ,
- Exhibiting exemplary moral and religious character,
- Modelling of humility and servant leadership,
- Modelling Methodist discipline, doctrine and Wesleyan spirituality" (2019a:123).

The value of this document is that it sets down the spiritual, moral and theological expectations of a presbyter which serve as a standard of the expected conduct of presbyters as well as holding them accountable for their actions. In her General Secretary's Report to the 2018 Conference, Rev Morgan (Morgan 2019:16-23) argues that "[a]ny Minister who claims that they are above accountability does not understand the Christian faith, and has no idea of Methodism" (Morgan 2019:19).

The conclusion reached is that, together with the recently introduced initiatives of the Conference, the new model of ordination insists that SMMS, the individual presbyter and the

[149] The accountability group is comprised of the Superintendent Minister, a Society Steward and 2 Lay persons who will meet with the presbyter. In the case of the Superintendent Minister, the group consists of the Bishop, a Circuit Steward and 2 Lay persons (MCSA 2018a:94).

community are all fundamental to the formation and continuing formation processes in the MCSA within our African context. The important elements in southern African culture of accountability and the role of the community in their formation and correction are now included in the continuing formation of presbyters, adding a distinctly African flavour to the ordination pot.

The final aspect regarding where our institutional culture requires adaptation relates to our system of governance and the method of conducting meetings adopted from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1882. The supreme authority of the MCSA is the Conference whose decisions are binding on every aspect of the doctrine and life of the denomination, circuit, preachers, presbyters and the laity. The Synod Bishop presides over the annual Synod, the Circuit Superintendent over the Circuit Quarterly Meeting of each circuit and the presbyter over the Society Leaders' Meeting. Meetings are conducted on a question-and-answer basis (MCSA 2016a:187-201), a procedure established by Rev Wesley, and conducted in terms of The Rules of Debate as laid down in the *Book of Order* (MCSA 2016a:184-186).

The concern is that the Rules of Debate, while seeking to "be applied only when necessary, and then in such a way as not to impair the spirit of the meeting" (MCSA 2016a:184) and that "the business in the courts of the Church is to be conducted in the form of a Conversation" (2016a:184), are readily applied in a restrictive and authoritarian manner. This is in contrast to aspects of the African methodology of governance and decision-making that incorporate consultation, deliberation, consensus and care that decisions taken will be for the benefit of the whole community. "In Africa democracy is based on the concept of sitting under a tree and discuss issues until everybody agrees (or more or less agrees). In other words, consensus has to be reached" (Broodryk 2010b:39).

Significantly, the MCSA has taken steps to be less autocratic and more consultative in the practices relating to governance and decision making. The Rules of Debate are only intended to be used "when necessary" (MCSA 2016a:184) and there is a devolution in decision-making processes to units, commissions and working groups who then bring proposals to the floor of Conference where decisions are made by consensus and not a majority vote. The MCSA (MCSA 2017d:1-2) portrays the benefits of decision-making by consensus reflecting that: "When the group comes to consensus, there are likely some people who did not agree, but they are willing to live with the decision of the group. Remember, consensus is about cooperating to find a way forward, and not about competing with one another" (MCSA 2017d:1).

As decision-making by consensus is consistent with traditional African culture "where numerous checks and balances on the exercise of power existed. Chiefs had to defer, at times, to their *indunas*, and communal meetings such as the *indaba* (Nguni) or *kgotla* (Sotho/Tswana) restrained and guided the power of traditional leaders" (Kretzschmar 2002:44). While "the role of African kingship albeit controversial is the bedrock of African leadership" (Magezi 2015:3), the African model of ordination in the MCSA must embrace and insist on consultation and consensus at all levels of governance. This is particularly important where persons hold legitimate views different from others and need to find an amicable and healing way forward. An example of where such a methodology is being gainfully practised was discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.5, relating to clergy and laity belonging to the LGBTIQ community. Adopting a consensus model has averted a schism in the MCSA by allowing persons to hold divergent views and treating each person with respect and dignity.

In summary, in order to achieve the outcome that "[o]ur institutional culture and dominant epistemology is to be more strongly African", the ingredients brewing in the African cooking pot are to be less reliant on a Western methodology of assessment and governance with a greater emphasis on an African methodology that incorporates communal participation, formation and evaluation. The African ingredients encourage cultural diversity, promote dialogue, the establishment of relationships and maximise decision-making and governance by consensus. Their incorporation will also enhance the role of the community in the formation of a probationer minister, in assessing the selection and screening of a candidate for the ministry as well as their worthiness and readiness for ordination. The presbyters feeding from the pot will be formed and nourished by material published by black theologians and presented within a context of an African narrative and methodology that incorporates elements from southern African culture, African spirituality and African Christianity. An emphasis on African feminism as well as the inclusion of competency in indigenous languages will greatly transform the present model to one that is relevant to our African context. The continued acceptance and application of consensus in decision-making and governance are vital ingredients in the Africanisation project. Placing these African-grown ingredients into the pot will ensure that an African narrative will be dominant in the practices of ordination cooking in the pot. To these will now be added aspects from African spirituality and culture relating specifically to the ordination service.

6.2 The ordination service

A concern that was raised consistently during the interviews was that the ordination service needs to be more strongly African and be more relevant and applicable to our southern African context.[150] While acknowledging the difficulty and restraints relating to the service, there was concern that the liturgy and ambience of the service are "too Western. We don't allow any emotional expression at those moments of ordination.... We need to make ordination a bit of a celebration. Currently, it is too cold. There is not much of an African vibe in it" (Nyobole 2018b). The perception is that the ordination service is very Western and does not sufficiently reflect our African context. A significant observation was that of Rev Paul (2018) who asked "if I had to conduct our ordination service in London, would the people ask: What do they mean by that? Why is that in there? I don't think they will because it is a straightforward English [Western] service" (Paul 2018). The Rev Peter (2018)[151] concurred, stating that the present ordination service "lacks expression of being a church in Africa to one that is more of an expression as a church in Europe or in the West" (Peter 2018). The manner in which aspects of southern African culture could transform the ordination service to be more African in flavour will now be presented.

6.2.1 Africanising the liturgy

A clarion call is for "a multilingual liturgy that is celebratory of the various languages of South Africa" (Malinga 2018) but one that is contextualised "using the correct metaphors and not just translated from English" (Molo 2018). Malinga (2018) also suggests that the liturgy of the ordination service is non-participatory by nature with the Presiding Bishop, General Secretary and Director of EMMU being the dominant persons, making "everybody else a spectator. It is not celebratory. The liturgy should be involving other people" (Malinga 2018).

These observations call attention to proposals that would infuse an African flavour into the ordination service. The liturgy needs to be revised to include greater participation by the congregation, be unequivocally multi-lingual, incorporate metaphors and idioms relevant to African culture and incorporate the communal nature of the African way of life. In addition,

[150] In the interview with the Presiding Bishop and the General Secretary, both spoke of the intention and efforts being made to indigenise the ordination service and to make it more inclusive. They cited the ordination service in Maputo in 2018 where Portuguese was included in the liturgy and a translated liturgy was projected onto the screen for the benefit of the local people.

[151] I am using a pseudonym in order to protect the person. The person's name is known to me and has given permission to use this quotation.

more opportunities for the community to celebrate in song in their traditional African manner need to be incorporated, as described by Ketshabile (2012): “Their rhythmic melody propels a systematic stamping of the feet, the beating of the drum or generally a small cushion that looks like a small pillow called *biti* — ‘the beat.’ It plays the role of the African drum and facilitates the harmonious stamping of the feet and movement of the singers” (Ketshabile 2012:247). Such opportunities for celebration in song are provided during the ordination service. However, the understanding of persons interviewed and my own experience are that these opportunities need to be increased in order to change the ambiance of the service to one that is less Western and more African where, “[w]hile singing, some people cry, pray, and dance, following the rhythms and lyrics of the various songs” Butticci (2014:121). Mbiti (1969) explains that “dancing and rejoicing strengthen community solidarity, and emphasize the corporateness of the whole group” (Mbiti 1969:123).

The statement by Mbete (2005: 115-119) that “[p]erhaps the greatest challenge facing us today is how to create a liturgy and songs fit for the context of Southern Africa today” (Mbete 2005:119) is an important one which would ensure that the liturgy of the ordination service would leave one in no doubt that this event was an African celebratory event of the MCSA. However, the warning that “[a]ll forms of liturgy, songs and worship in Methodism must seek to strike a balance between a sense of order and tradition, and a certain degree of freedom and spontaneity” (2005:117) also needs to be considered.

The task of Africanising the liturgy of the ordination service and the inclusion of more communal participation should be referred to DEWCOM for their consideration and revisioning. A strongly-flavoured, contextualised African liturgy would not detract from the meaning of the service. The on-screen translation would be available, as happened at the 2018 ordination service in Maputo, where the liturgy was translated for the benefit of the Portuguese-speaking congregation members.

6.2.2 Increasing the role and meaning of ritual and symbolism

The ordination service incorporates rituals dating back to the early Church and early Methodism including the laying on of hands, prayer to the Holy Spirit and the presentation of a Bible and certificate to the ordinands. Each of these rituals performed at this significant event in the life of a presbyter carries a meaning beyond the action itself, as has been described in Chapter 5, sections 5.1-5.5.

Ritual plays a central role in African society and is incorporated, for example, in celebrating the rites of passage for women at puberty, childbirth, marriage and widowhood and for men during their rites of passage to manhood. Ritual also plays a significant role in African Independent Religions and African spirituality. The statement that "Rituals are the sacramental self-realization of the individual or the church and are thus indispensable" (Edet 2010:313) supports this premise.

The significance of ritual in African culture is in conveying "symbolic meanings in addition to the physical drama and impact" (Mbiti 1969:121). An example is of initiation in African culture during which time the young men withdraw to live together in special huts away from the villages or in the forests. During this time they receive instruction on what it means to be a man in African society. Mbiti (1969) explains that this withdrawal "is a symbolic experience of the process of dying, living in the spirit world and being reborn (resurrected). The rebirth, that is the act of rejoining their families, emphasizes and dramatizes that the young people are now new, they have different personalities, they have lost their childhood, and in some societies they even receive completely new names" (1969:121).

In Xhosa culture, on celebrating the return of the initiates to their families following their transition to manhood, a dignified gentleman is selected and in the *ukuthambisa* (lubrication) ceremony will anoint the young men with a particular kind of oil from head to toe and place a stick or spear on their heads. Having been welcomed back, each man is now granted recognition and authority within the community and is entitled to certain privileges, such as getting a wife (Sifo 2019).

Another example of the deeper symbolic significance of ritual is that associated with the naming of a child in the culture of the people of Zimbabwe and other African cultures where it is in "the naming ceremony that the baby was introduced to society and was [now]

considered *munthu* (a person) with rights and responsibilities like all other members of society" (Chitambo 1998:110).[152]

In addition to ritual expressing meaning beyond the actions performed and having meaning for the individual concerned, they are equally significant for the incorporation, relationship and responsibilities of the individual in the community. The rituals in the ordination service (MCSA 2018d:1-11) relate to the incorporation of the ordinand into the Order of Presbyters and into the covenantal relationship with the Conference. The rites include the laying on of hands; prayer to the Holy Spirit and Reception into Full Connexion to the role of a presbyter; their being granted authority "for the office and work of a Minister in the Church of Christ" (2018d:5); and their relationship and accountability to the Conference.

My concern, from the perspective of African culture and spirituality, is that the present acts of ritual do not sufficiently express "symbolic meanings in addition to the physical drama and impact" (Mbiti 1969:121). Neither do they reflect the changed relationship of the presbyter with the community nor the acceptance by the community of that newly-ordained presbyter. I am concerned that the theological understanding and the significance of the individual rites and their collective meaning are assumed in the liturgy of the ordination service and that they are not clearly understood by many attending the ceremony. Those who are theologically educated may well grasp the greater significance of each rite, but the order of service does not sufficiently plumb the depths of meaning associated with the ritual in African culture.

The inclusion of a portion into the liturgy explaining the deeper symbolic meaning and implications of the present rites would contribute an African flavour to the cooking pot of ordination. The incorporation of an additional rite from southern African culture needs to be considered. A suggestion is that anointing with oil is a rite practised widely in the Christian Church, often related to healing but not limited to it. In a similar manner to which the Xhosa people welcome the newly-initiated men into the community with the ritual of *ukuthambisa* (lubrication), the anointing of the ordinands with oil as part of the ritual of ordination should be considered. The way ahead is for the Conference to task DEWCOM and the BMC to explore how the symbolic and deeper meaning of ritual from an African perspective − for example, the anointing with oil and the explanation thereof − could be incorporated into the ordination service.

[152] See also Mbiti 1969:118-120.

Supporting the increased role of ritual, a greater emphasis on the role of symbols needs to be introduced into the service of ordination. Chuba (1998: 48-60) insists that "[w]e must persistently make full use of indigenous tools in paying our homage to God and in explaining our faith in him to the world because it is biblically justified" (Chuba 1998:52).

The significance of the symbols incorporated into the ordination service need to be enhanced: the candle that is lit at the beginning of the service; the Bible and Certificate of Ordination presented to each ordinand; and the prepared elements for the celebration of Holy Communion. A proposal is that these symbols need to be presented to the congregation and their significance in the ritual of the ordination service explained in a similar manner to which a mother presents her child to the family and community (Edet 2010:310-311), remembering that "[t]o show something ceremonially, whether a sign, an object, or a person, is to declare a sacred presence, to acclaim the miracle of a hierophany" (2010:311).

The presentation of symbols to the congregation is not uncommon in Methodist practice. A report by Sikhakhane (2018) in the February edition of *New Dimension* describes children presenting a bowl of water, bread, bottle of wine and a candle to the Presiding Bishop during the induction of the Rev Ketshabile as a bishop. Together with each presentation, a statement was made relating to how these elements affirm the role of a bishop, for example: "Take this water, be renewed in your baptism and renew us in ours" (Sikhakhane 2018). A similar procedure of presenting the symbols associated with ordination could be introduced into the ordination service in order to strengthen the African cultural flavour to the practice.

Additional symbols which have meaning on the African continent should also be introduced and incorporated into the ordination service, possibly when each ordinand receives a Bible from the Presiding Bishop and the Certificate of Ordination from the Director of EMMU. A meaningful addition to the service, Molo suggests, would be the inclusion of a symbol, accompanied by a portion of liturgy, "indicating that the ordination of the presbyter links them with those who have gone before who, having passed away, are present and celebrating with you much in the same way as invoking the Hebrew notion of a cloud of witnesses that is very African…. When I get ordained I am not starting something new. I am joining millions of people who came before me and who have been serving God" (Molo 2018). In traditional African culture that symbol would have been a spear (Nyobole 2018b). However, such a symbol is not appropriate in the context of ordination.

The symbol being proposed need not be something physical handed to the ordinands but could take the form of a praise poem performed by an *imbongi*, a praise poet/singer in African culture, whose role is both to inspire and to remind the chief, or a figurehead, of their heritage by including references to the praise names of the chief and the chief's ancestors (Imbongi n.d). The proposal is that a presbyter of standing in the church be called upon to recall their heritage for the ordinands and the congregation, even recalling the names of some of the "Church Fathers", to both inspire and challenge the ordinands to remember their heritage in Christ's service, in much the same way as an *imbongi*.[153]

The introduction of symbols associated with traditional healing in African culture should also be incorporated in the light of the Mission Statement of the MCSA that "God calls the Methodist people to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ for healing and transformation" (MCSA 2019a:2). Rev Abrahams (2018) suggests "the burning of *imphepho*, white sage, in much the same way as incense is used in the Anglican and Catholic traditions" (Abrahams 2018). In southern Africa, *imphepho* is a component of traditional African medicine to treat coughs and fever. In its ritual use, "imphepho is believed to invoke and placate the ancestors and to drive away malicious spirits; since these are regarded as common causes of illness in African traditional medicine" (Helichrysum petiolare n.d.). While Christianity may understand illness and healing differently, the widespread use of herbs in healing in African Traditional religions and the explanation of the deeper meaning of this symbol in southern African culture to the congregation would enrich the link between the healing properties of white sage with the task of both laity and clergy in proclaiming "Jesus Christ for healing and transformation" (MCSA 2019a:2).

Just as ritual needs to be enhanced in the ordination service, the use of symbols associated with ordination also require greater attention in an Africanised model. It is proposed that the liturgy be amended to include the presentation of the symbols associated with the ritual of ordination to the congregation, using relevant language and idiom from African culture. It is also proposed that the liturgy be expanded and an additional symbol be introduced to portray ordination as encompassing those being ordained with presbyters from the past; those serving as presbyters at present; and anticipating those to be ordained in the future. A further

[153] It is of interest that "the earliest written record of izibongo was made by Methodist missionary James Whitworth. Whitworth noted in his 6 April 1825 journal entry while visiting Gcaleka king Hintsa: 'At sunset, a man proclaimed aloud the transactions of the day, which seems to be the usual custom, ending with 'Our Captain is a great Captain. When the white men came to see him, he received them kindly and gave them an ox to eat'" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imbongi.

proposal is the incorporation of a symbol associated with traditional healing in African culture.

Once again, the way ahead is for the Conference to task DEWCOM, with the assistance of the BMC, to explore how ingredients relating to ritual and symbols grown in African soil can be introduced into the practices of the ordination service. These relate to the presentation of the symbols, the introduction of additional symbols and symbols relating to healing, knowing that the amendments are supported in African spirituality where "worship in African Independent Churches is essentially ritualistic in a sense that it is full of symbols pregnant with religious meaning" (Amanze 1998:70).

6.2.3 The celebration of Holy Communion

An important element in the ordination service is the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion, remembering that presbyters are specifically set aside to the ministry of Word and Sacraments. The celebration of Holy Communion at the ordination service is, therefore, a significant opportunity for the assembled community to celebrate the ordination of the presbyters to the ministry of Word and Sacraments. During the ordination service, each ordinand, together with their families and invited persons, receive the sacrament from the church officials, celebrating their ordination in a meaningful manner.

In terms of Methodist tradition, the elements of bread and wine are represented at the service by wafers on a platter and non-alcoholic grape juice in small communion glasses. In order to Africanise this practice, a suggestion was made that, instead of wafers, the "bread be cooked and distributed in a black pot, a symbol known to African people with the knowledge that these are the things of God" (Sifo 2018). The introduction of the bread being baked in an African pot and dispensed from the pot instead of the wafers being served on a plate from a box, would bring a significant African flavour to the service of Holy Communion and needs to be referred to the Connexional Executive for implementation.

While the sacrament of Holy Communion symbolises feasting at the Table of our Lord Jesus Christ and, as enjoying a meal together is an integral part of African culture, "indeed wherever two or three meet for a purpose" (Gundani 1998:2), the desirability and practicality of celebrating the ordination of the presbyters with a meal is to be investigated. An example of the importance of the meal following a significant event in the life of the community is

given by Ketshabile (2012) describing what follows the burial of a person among the Barolong people of Mahikeng:

> After the burial the meat of the beast was consumed by all those who had come to attend the funeral. Those who exempted themselves from participating in the meal were viewed with suspicion and disdain. By abstaining from partaking in this meal, "one declares himself or herself unwilling to be integrated into the community…. The community is spiritually connected to the living gathered at the home of the deceased and his or her kin around the funeral meal" (Ketshabile 2012:177).

In keeping with this practice in southern African culture, Malinga (2018) proposes that the ordination service should be followed by a meal together, in keeping with the African tradition of "the community in fellowship around a feast" (Malinga 2018), bearing in mind that it is during these festivities that individual, family and community ties are strengthened.

6.2.4 The development of a liturgy for a "Coming Home" celebration

With thousands of people attending the ordination service and the constraints on time and movement in some of the ordination venues, the celebration of the sacrament by the assembled congregation can become unruly and even chaotic in spite of various solutions being considered. A suggestion to be considered in an Africanised model was made by the General Secretary, Rev Morgan (2018b), and raised in Chapter 4, section 4.3.2.3. Her recommendation is that a "Coming Home Celebration" be held. This celebration would allow for the ordination of the presbyter to be recognised and celebrated by either the circuit from which the ordinand proceeded to the Conference, or the "home" community who helped raise and form the person spiritually up to the time of their candidature for the ministry. The provision of such a service may assist in reducing the numbers of people attending the ordination service, often at great expense; provide an opportunity for celebration for those not able to attend the Conference; as well as provide a time of celebration appropriate to African culture.

The question to be posed is whether or not such a celebration would be relevant in our southern African context. In a brief telephonic conversation, and then an email exchange, the Rev Quluba (2019) spoke of the significance of such an occasion following his ordination in 2018. He highlighted that his coming home celebration was more about connecting with his place of origin and spiritual formation than a celebration in the circuit where the journey towards ordination was completed. He described the significance of returning to the place of his birth, the place from which his Christian character and formation were cultivated from as

early as he could remember. He felt that he owed the joy of his ordination to his forebears and to the people who guided his spiritual journey.

Following his ordination, he opted to visit his place of birth where the elders of the family waited for him at the kraal. Here he could reconnect with the departed, receive words of appreciation and encouragement from the elders on this, their grandchild, achieving this milestone, re-focus on the journey which lay ahead and then enjoy a celebratory meal together. This event was arranged by the family members and not the congregation, although congregation members were involved.

From discussion with Rev Quluba and other presbyters, it is clear that there is no standardised practice of celebrating the ordination of the presbyters, either by the circuit from which the ordinand proceeds to Conference or the circuit in which they grew up or were formed spiritually. It would appear from my limited discussions that such an occasion is more regularly arranged and celebrated by the families of the presbyter in their home situation or by friends of the ordinand in the circuit from which they proceeded to Conference following their time of formation at SMMS.

In response to my request for liturgies used by presbyters on such an occasion on a MCSA ministerial discussion group, not a single reply was received relating to liturgy but I did receive a reply reflecting a sense of the need for a post-ordination celebration: “I think something would be most appropriate to mark the event in a minister's congregation because very few, if any, are able to actually be at the Ordination Service” (Sprong 2019).

With the adoption of such a practice in the MCSA, a liturgy would need to be developed[154] to celebrate the coming home of the newly ordained presbyter, in keeping with the practices of southern African culture of welcoming men and women home following their rites of initiation and on marriage. Such an event, although not held at the venue of ordination, would further enhance the Africanisation of ordination.

A different solution may be to revert to the practice of the church between 1990 and 1995 when regional ordination services were held (MCSA 1995:10). These were arranged in compliance with the resolution of the Conference of 1990 to “hold regional ordination services and to promote participation by our members [laity] in these services” (MCSA 1990:344). During these years, the services for the Reception of Ordinands into Full

[154] This is a subject that deserves further research with the possible outcome of a sample liturgy for use on such occasions.

Connexion were conducted during the Conference sessions but the ordinations took place regionally at venues across southern Africa in the months following the Conference (MCSA 1994:8, 1995:10).

It must be placed on record that such a proposal has not been widely tested, is not in alignment with the Methodist tenet of connexionalism and may not be the preference of the ordinands. An ordinand from 2018, Rev Quluba, indicated that the ordination should take place at Conference, stating: "I think Conference is a solemn and memorable occasion that goes down as a historical moment in one's journey…. Regional ordination ceremonies would take something away from those to be ordained, more so if it would be done at the following Synod gathering" (Quluba 2019).

For such a change to take place, Conference would need to task the appropriate structures to investigate the reintroduction of regional ordination services as it would mean that ordinands would be received into Full Connexion at the Conference and then ordained at regional ordination services, conducted at the synod level.

6.2.5 The dress code of presbyters and bishops

The style and nature of the dress code for presbyters, both male and female, during the service of ordination certainly require attention in order to become more appropriate and relevant to the African context. The colonial dress code of the bishops and presbyters gives the impression that the service is taking place in Europe and not in Africa, with everyone similarly attired in cassocks, clerical collars and with the bishops wearing stoles. A very large proportion of the congregation also dress in their uniforms of either their organisations or as clergy persons. There is little of the dress code of African people and their cultures in evidence either on the stage or in the congregation.

The fact that the ordinands are required to wear a black cassock at ordination is in keeping with the dress requirements while at SMMS for formal occasions; at the community monthly communion service; and when fulfilling their preaching appointments in the surrounding churches (Sifo 2018). The attire of the bishops is also consistent with their dress code when performing their formal functions as the Bishop of a Synod, dressed in their white cassock and stole.

An Africanised model must introduce greater flexibility in the dress of the ordinands and the officiating presbyters. While still requiring ordinands and presbyters to be dressed as befits

the occasion, the MCSA is a church in Africa and not in Europe. An Africanised ordination service should, therefore, consider a change in the clerical dress code from our Western style of cassocks and stoles. A minimum requirement would be a clerical collar to be worn together with appropriate attire suitable for the occasion and our African context. The colours of Africa could be celebrated.

An additional consideration related to the dress code for presbyters is that the present prescribed dress style for presbyters is distinctively masculine. Women preachers and presbyters are instructed that blouses, earrings, dresses and skirts with a slit at the back are "not to be worn" (MCSA 2018e:5). In discussing vestments from a women's perspective, Krige (2011:1-2) indicates that "male dress decorum rules have been carried over to include them [women], possibly indicating an acceptance of women only if they dress traditionally as their male counterparts" (Krige 2011:1). Women presbyters should be permitted to dress in a more feminine and appropriate manner, including that of their African culture.

Related to the dress code of presbyters is the need for an Africanised doctrine of ordination to investigate whether the dress code of bishops and presbyters communicates a message of power and superiority instead of being "called to share Christ's ministry of love and service for the healing and renewal of humanity and all creation" (MCSA 2018d:4). The challenge in this regard comes from Grassow (2015:1-3) when he states: "The MCSA is captive in many parts to a western, materialist theology that is driven by wealth and glamour…and we want to see our leaders dressed in the garments of the powerful" (Grassow 2015:1). In doing so, we would do well to heed the words of Rev Wesley: "I have advised you not to be comfortable to the world herein; to lay aside all needless ornaments; to avoid all needless expense; to be patterns of plainness to all that are around you…. Are you all exemplary plain in your apparel?" (Outler 1986:382). An Africanised doctrine of ordination must not allow an elaborate dress code by presbyters to give the impression that they are to be equated with a chief nor that they enjoy a superior status.

As discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.1, amendments need to be adopted in the constitutions of the Uniformed Organisations of the MCSA. The differentiated and distinctive dress code of a presbyter and presbyter's wife as members of the Local Preachers' Association (MCSA 2018e:50), the Women's Manyano (2018e:89), the Young Women's Manyano (2018e:109) and the Young Men's Guild (MCSA 2009:96) certainly gives the impression that they enjoy a superior status in relation to the lay members. The fact that leadership positions are reserved for the spouse of the presbyter or that a woman presbyter must serve as the

chairperson/president of the Women's Manyano (2018e:101) and the Young Women's Manyano (2018e:110) further supports the message that both a presbyter and his/her spouse have an elevated status. Mbiti (1969) draws our attention to the fact that in African culture "[a]s kings, queens, chiefs and other rulers are given this sacred position and regard, those related to them are also treated with special respect" (Mbiti 1969:185), a principle that also seems entrenched in the polity and practices of the MCSA. An Africanised doctrine, therefore, needs to address this practice of the perceived power and superiority of presbyters and the partners of those who serve in the ordained ministry.

In considering the appropriate dress code in an Africanised doctrine of ordination, additional factors need to be taken into consideration. The dress code for presbyters and bishops is compounded by the fact that the MCSA is in ecumenical relationships with some churches who have a similar dress code, as for example the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, and with whom we share a recognition of ministry, serve in United Church Parishes and whose clergy may be permitted to act as an ordaining presbyter in the MCSA (MCSA 2016a:37). The dress code for bishops and presbyters in the MCSA, therefore, needs to take into account our African context as well as our ecumenical relationships. In addition, it is imperative that every ingredient placed into the cooking pot − including the liturgy, symbolism, dress code and every action in the ordination service − is theologically sound.

The way ahead is for the Conference to task DEWCOM to revisit the Methodist theology of dress relating to the dress code of preachers, presbyters, bishops and the relevant stipulations of the Uniformed Organisations.[155] Only then can Conference formulate amendments to the dress code of bishops and presbyters participating in the ordination service. The adaptations in the adoption of an Africanised dress code in the ordination service will, therefore, only become possible after all the internal procedures of the MCSA have been attended to. In the meantime, this matter needs to be presented as a resolution to an annual Synod for forwarding to the Conference for their consideration and resolution.

[155] This is a topic requiring further investigation and clarification and could form the basis of a paper to be published in a theological journal.

6.2.6 The inclusion of the Lay President in ordaining presbyters

A final matter relating to the Africanisation of the ordination service is that of the participation of the Lay President in the ordination of presbyters. Reintroducing the practice in the early 2000s, circa 2001-2003, whereby the Lay President participated in the laying on of hands, should be considered. This practice was in keeping with the decision of the Conference of 2001 that: "Because ordination is an act of the whole Church it is important that the ordaining presbyters (elders) include both lay and ordained persons" (MCSA 2002:13). The practice was, however, discontinued soon thereafter as "[t]here was a lot of resistance from the clergy and it was silently done away with because the Bishops did not find a plausible theological rationale" (Nyobole 2018a).

The justification for such an investigation arises from the belief and commitment of the MCSA to the doctrine of the "universal priesthood of believers" (MCSA 2016a:12) and is supported by the question posed by Rev John (2018) that "[i]f in ordination the church sets presbyters apart but not above others in ministry, then why do we exclude lay people?" (John 2018). Another reason is that, if the Methodist understanding of apostolic succession is not the passing on of the baton from individual to individual but "the community of the church authorising certain persons to continue with the work of God's ministry in obedience to the commission of Jesus Christ" (MCSA 2002:20-21), then there is no reason, theologically, to exclude the place of the laity in ordination as they form part of the community of the Conference that authorises the ordination.

The traditional understanding is that such a restriction is in keeping with presbyters being ordained into the Order of Presbyters and should, therefore, be restricted to those within the Order (MCSA 2016a:20). However, in keeping with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the inclusive nature of African society, the reintroduction of the practice of the laying on of hands by the Lay President should not be restricted to presbyters. As the original decision to allow the Lay President to participate in the ordination of presbyters was adopted at the Conference of 2001 (MCSA 2002:13) and the decision to rescind that practice was not taken by a Conference, the matter needs to be referred to DEWCOM for a thorough investigation into the possible reintroduction of this practice in the Africanised doctrine of ordination.

In summary, the inclusion of practices grown in southern African soil into an Africanised model of the ordination service would add a distinctively African flavour whilst maintaining

decorum and fulfilling God's calling of people to be set apart for God's work. The liturgy should be transformed into one that is African, multi-lingual, participatory and which uses language representative of African culture. The meaning of the ritual and symbols associated with ordination are enhanced by the contribution of African ritual and symbols. The celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion is enhanced by African cultural traditions together with the possible holding of a "Coming Home" celebration of the ordinand following their ordination. The theology of dress and a dress code that is both appropriate for both male and female presbyters and bishops serving on our African continent and more representative of presbyters as servants of Christ need to be considered. These, as well as the possibility that ordination services be held regionally and for the participation by the Lay President in the laying on of hands will add ingredients grown in African soil to the cooking pot of both the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA.

Once again, the way ahead is for the Conference to task DEWCOM, with the assistance of the BMC, to explore each of these proposals for presentation and adoption by the Conference.

It is my understanding in terms of the proposed model that, when people are present at an ordination service of the MCSA, they will see the face of Africa and be left in no doubt that celebrating the occasion was an African experience. The African model would mean that the ordination service would be theologically sound, contain the essential elements pertinent to an ordination service of the Methodist denomination but it would also be readily recognised for its African cultural elements and expressions. Having attended the service, people would feel as though they were leaving an eatery after enjoying a meal from an African pot − decidedly African in its flavour and presentation − yet undoubtedly Methodist in its content. In addition, both presbyters and the laity must feel assured that their role in ministry in order to establish God's Kingdom here on earth is a joint and cooperative one.

Having evaluated the effectiveness of the Africanisation of both the doctrine and practices of ordination and determining how applying aspects of our southern African culture will further assist in adapting ordination cooking in our African pots, this chapter now turns to important aspects relating to an Africanised model of ordination and its practices.

6.3 Dealing with possible unintended consequences of African culture and spirituality

In section 4.5 of Chapter 4, titled a 'Critique of a Southern African epistemology', the matter of possible unintended consequences arising from the assimilation of an African epistemology and culture into the doctrine and practices of ordination was raised. A brief response to those issues in relation to the Africanised model will follow.

The question to be answered is whether the Africanisation of ordination entails the rejection of all colonial elements or the assimilation of new elements from African culture and spirituality into the colonial model so as to create an inclusive model applicable to the African continent. It is my understanding that the new, Africanised model will not discard all Western elements, will introduce elements from southern African culture and spirituality and will embrace the essential elements of both. The new comprehensive model would be faithful to the doctrines of the Christian Church and Wesleyan tradition, continue with the practices relating to the calling, formation and ordination of Methodist presbyters in a connexional structure but would also be unapologetically African in its expression. As African Christianity is not at variance with Western Christianity, the inclusion of ingredients grown in African soil will most certainly provide an unmistakably African flavour to the cooking pot.

Another of the unintended consequences raised was the danger, common to both colonial and African cultures, of the sacralisation of power and authority in governance, structures and leadership. Governance in the MCSA follows a connexional model conducted through the sessions of Conference, Synod, Circuit Quarterly Meeting and Society Leaders' Meeting, all of which were established in the colonial era. These structures are not incompatible with African culture and African forms of governance. However, the ingredients grown in African soil of consultative processes with decision-making by consensus and less power invested in those in leadership, together with a generous serving of accountability by everyone, must be placed into the cooking pot. An Africanised model must also ensure that the suggestions and proposals of all persons and not only those received from persons in positions of power are to be given appropriate consideration.

The issue of the power of the BMC should also be examined as it relates to their relationship with the MCSA. As has been indicated in Chapter 4, section 4.2, the role of the BMC was integral to the Africanisation project in the MCSA with their stated goal as: "The BMC exists for the Transformation of the MCSA into a truly African Church (in character, doctrine,

ethos, identity and practice) by challenging and equipping Black Methodists to contribute meaningfully, actively and intelligently in the MCSA given the context of Africans" (BMC 2015:2). As a very powerful and influential structure, their influence has been instrumental in the decolonisation and Africanisation processes in the church including the appropriate appointment and representation of black presbyters, the establishment of a black narrative in the MCSA and the affirmation of the worth and being of black persons in the church.

However, the relationship between the BMC and the MCSA is one that has been addressed over many years with the BMC insisting on remaining independent and not being incorporated into the formal structures of the MCSA. The current Chairperson of the BMC, Rev Molo (2018), justified this decision on two grounds. The first is that "like any prophetic movement, it must be distanced otherwise it becomes part of the institutional protection and defence of the institution" (Molo 2018); and second: "Since its inception, the BMC said we need a space where black people gather in order for them to reflect deeply on the questions that affect them as black people, a place to gather the confidence necessary, gather the tools necessary and gather the influence necessary so that when they go into the broader church they can influence the broader church" (Molo 2018).

The question is that, if we are speaking of an Africanised MCSA, does this not require that the relationship between the BMC and the MCSA needs to be formalised within the structures of the church? This relationship was questioned in 2006 by the Presiding Bishop at that time, Bishop Abrahams, in his address to the Connexional Executive. He stated: "Although I was at the launch of the BMC in 1976, I struggle in the same way that I have seen many of my peers in academia, who believe passionately in non-racialism wrestle with the formation of the 'Native Club' in a participatory democracy" (Abrahams 2007:7).

For a just and united witness of the MCSA, an Africanised model should incorporate a formal and transparent relationship between the MCSA and the BMC. This is a matter which reaches to the heart of the issue of "whiteness" and "blackness" within the MCSA, which was raised in Chapter 4, sections 4.1-4.2, and needs to be managed in a multi-racial and multi-cultural church. It is my experience that there is growing anxiety, even fear, among white members and congregations that they will be marginalised and who are asking, "Is there a place for us?" On the other hand, the excitement of the President of the Women's Auxiliary in my home Circuit is noted as she celebrates that a black woman has been elected for the first time to be the Synod President of the Women's Auxiliary of the Limpopo Synod from March 2020.

The unintended consequences of the emphasis being placed on the community over the individual were also raised. In African culture there is a potential for the centrality of communalism to restrict an individual's autonomy, needs, beliefs, values, ethics and the freedom to challenge the same of their community. With the MCSA being a connexional church and laying great store on the authority of the Conference, the stationing of presbyters by the Conference and their accountability to the Conference, there is a danger that the concept of communalism will overshadow that of individual presbyters and their well-being.

An example of such a dilemma an Africanised model will need to deal with is that of the itinerant stationing of presbyters by the Connexional Executive and Conference. The itinerant stationing of presbyters by the Conference is one of the hallmarks of Methodist polity. Preachers were initially appointed by Rev Wesley, and thereafter by the Conference, to the circuits in which they would serve and to which they would be accountable, a practice which continues to the present. It is very colonial, can prove to be disruptive for both presbyters and communities and does not appear to be compatible with African culture.

The relevance of the issue of itinerant stationing by the Conference in our context was highlighted in Chapter 4, section 4.3.2.1, when it arose in the interview with the General Secretary, Rev Morgan (2018b). It is her belief that "there is nothing African about itinerancy. The idea of having to move and be a stranger every 3 or 5 years in a new community is very disruptive and you cause disruption and dissatisfaction in a community" (Morgan 2018b). Her reflection is that we would have a very different Methodist Church if the successor to the incumbent presbyter originated from within the community, having grown up among and been known by them. Her contention is that "we could then ordain and keep them where they came from because those people respect the person and that person has a relationship with the people. It is, however, a foreign thing in the thought of the church" (Morgan 2018b). Although itinerancy served the Methodist denomination well in the past, the question needs to be investigated as to whether it is an appropriate ingredient in the African cooking pot.[156] The insights of Morgan (2018b) would serve as an appropriate base from which to investigate such an adaptation to our African context.

While noting the danger of the individual being absorbed by the communal, the warning of Rev Abrahams (2018) also needs to be considered. He states that: "Our theology needs to move from being dominated by Western individualism. There is no doubt in my mind that the

[156] A thorough investigation of the significance and implications of the itinerant stationing system of the MCSA in the 21st century and on the African continent needs to take place.

Methodist clergy, black or white, are captured through a very middle-class individualistic existence. We need to throw off some of those vestiges" (Abrahams 2018). The ingredients of the significance and relationship between the individual and the community, therefore, need to be managed carefully in order not to spoil the new model cooking in the African pot.

In summary, the Africanised model of ordination is as prone to abuse as was the colonial model. It is essential that the ingredients of accountability and the well-being of the community from southern African cultures and spirituality are included to ensure that the excesses of old are not replicated in the new model. However, it would be in the interests of the MCSA to recommend to the relevant structures that they examine and establish measures to deal with the sacralisation of power and authority in persons and structures; the relationship of the BMC with the MCSA; and the place, role and significance of the concepts of blackness and whiteness in what is now a predominantly black church. The implications of the African cultural emphasis on the communal over the individual and how that relates to the Methodist concept of connexionalism need further investigation as do the present practices relating to the itinerant stationing of presbyters that seems to be unjust and outdated in the present age.

6.4 Three concerns to receive ongoing attention

Concerns were raised in Chapter 3 regarding the need for the continued attention of the MCSA and all presbyters in applying the Africanised model. These included the plea of women presbyters to be freed from their continuing experience of paternalism and discrimination; the marginalising of MCSA members and presbyters on the grounds of their sexual orientation; and a financial model of the MCSA that needs further investigation. In spite of the progress made in dealing with these matters by the Conference, they need ongoing attention as each of these elements and the accountability by the structures in regard to each one are important for the Africanised model of ordination.

The first is the marginalisation of women presbyters, dealt with extensively in Chapter 3, section 3.4, and will not be repeated other than to remind us of resolutions passed recently which highlight the absolute necessity of monitoring the marginalisation of women.

The Conference of 2018 adopted three resolutions relating to the Harassment of Women Ministers, Women in Leadership Roles and Representation of Women in the structures of the church (MCSA 2019a:84-85). All three resolutions are welcomed and supported as they

reveal the intentions and commitment of the Conference to deal with the embedded continuing presence of paternalism inherent in some areas in the life of the MCSA.

It is important to record the unhappiness of some within the MCSA at the decisions of the Conference in 2018 relating to women in leadership positions. The decision was taken to fill the post of the General Secretary with a man in 2020, a post which is presently occupied by a women presbyter. The discontent arose when, having taken this decision, the Conference then resolved that "as from 2019 Conference will ensure that the Church shall appoint women to the offices of the Connexion including, Bishops, Presiding Bishop and General Secretary and Lay President, ensuring 40% representation is maintained" (MCSA 2019a:84). The perception by some was that the Conference of 2018 was not being consistent in its decision-making.

In response to the growing call for change in the representation of women in leadership, the Synods of 2019 elected the Rev Purity Malinga as Presiding Bishop elect of the MCSA and she will be inducted into that office at the Conference of 2019. Rev Malinga served as the first woman bishop in the MCSA between 1998 and 2008 and will be the first woman to serve as the Presiding Bishop of the MCSA. Two women presbyters, Revs Yvette Moses and Faith Whitby, were elected by their Synods and nominated to become the bishops of their respective Synods in the Cape of Good Hope and Gauteng, decisions that need to be ratified by the Conference of 2019. In addition, the Connexional Executive appointed the Rev Morgan to become bishop of the Synod of Namibia that is to be inaugurated in January 2020. The elections of women bishops by the Synods and the appointment by the Connexional Executive of the MCSA are significant in developing a more inclusive and Africanised leadership of the church as two of the new incumbents are persons of African ethnic heritage and all four are women.

Another significant appointment was announced in July 2019 when the SMMS Board Chairperson, Dr Mnganga, announced that Dr Marie has been appointed as the President of the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary. Dr Marie is the first women to fill this position (SMMS 2019).

The continuing efforts of the Conference to deal with the marginalisation of women and patriarchy are to be supported and encouraged. However, the MCSA will be best served by two additional actions: the monitoring of the resolutions being implemented; and the accountability of presbyters and structures at all levels within the MCSA in fulfilling that

commitment. The marginalisation of women clergy and patriarchy cannot continue in the African cooking pot from a perspective of Christian justice.

The second area requiring further attention in an Africanised doctrine of ordination relates to ministry impacting the LGBTIQ persons within the MCSA, both clergy and laity. This concern was highlighted in Chapter 3, section 3.5. Discussions relating to the marginalising of MCSA members and presbyters on the grounds of their sexual orientation have continued in the courts of the church since the early 2000s and have an impact on the relationships of presbyters in a same-sex relationship as well as their pastoral care of such persons. Methodist presbyters are not permitted to enter into a Civil Union and may not officiate at a Civil Union ceremony or bless their congregants in same-sex relationships (MCSA 2018a:292-293).

The implication for this study is that persons in the MCSA suffer discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Presbyters from the LGBTIQ community are excluded from entering into a Civil Union on the grounds of their sexuality at a time when "[t]he MCSA is, *de facto,* a church with divergent convictions on this issue that have theological integrity" (MCSA 2011:106). This restriction places inordinate pressures on the presbyter and their partner and is described as "a form of apartheid based not on skin colour but sexual orientation – with the church now the oppressor" (Storey 2018:466). It would be wise for the MCSA to allow the injunction of Saint Paul in our Scriptures to guide our decisions, namely: "So let's stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall" (Romans 14:13 – New Living Translation).

The discrimination extends to the pastoral role of a presbyter remembering that "the exercise of pastoral care is an integral part of a minister's calling" (MCSA 2018a:292). The restriction of Conference prohibiting a presbyter of the MCSA officiating at a Civil Union ceremony or to bless such couples is discriminatory and negatively impacts their pastoral ministry.

These restrictions are in place despite the resolution of the Conference of 2010 (MCSA 2011:104-106) that: "There is a current theological inconsistency within the MCSA where it allows this divergence of conviction to be held without the freedom for such divergence of conviction to be exercised" (MCSA 2011:106). This brings the debate into sharp focus. The intention of Conference that decision-making processes are to be based on consensus and not a voting majority where persons hold legitimate but divergent views is significant as it should also apply to the marginalising of MCSA members and presbyters on the grounds of their sexual orientation.

Closely associated with the principle of consensus in the African model must be the Wesleyan commitment to the concept of personal conscience in decision-making. The principle, introduced by Wesley and then adopted from the early Conferences, was that "no authority can take away the right of private judgment" (Rack 2011:62). Preachers were required to be subject to the decisions of Conference "so far as we can without wounding our several consciences" (Rack 2011:189). Wesley is adamant that "I have no right over your conscience, nor you over mine; therefore, both you and I must follow our own conscience" (Tyerman 1973b:248, 256).

An Africanised model of ordination should, therefore, allow for presbyters to act according to their conscience, as Methodist preachers are directed to do by Rev Wesley. Consequently, a decolonised and Africanised doctrine of ordination needs to be reviewed and allow for presbyters in a same-sex relationship to enter into a Civil Union and that any restrictions on them − either blessing or conducting such unions − are discontinued.

However, before such a decision can be made, the MCSA will need to redefine its doctrine and description of marriage and the relationship entered into between same-sex couples. This appraisal is in keeping with the DEWCOM report of 2017 (MCSA 2018a:288-297), and adopted by the Conference, that "the time has now come for the MCSA to embark on a new phase in its engagement with the LGBTIQ conversation, in which further steps need to be taken if this church is to offer a safe and hospitable space for all who seek in it a home, especially those from the LGBTIQ community" (MCSA 2018a:291). The Conference of 2018 tasked DEWCOM to produce a discussion document on the understanding of Christian marriage in the MCSA (MCSA 2019a:271). This directive to DEWCOM indicates that processes are in place for proposals to be brought to the Conference for decision-making. It is my opinion, however, that the Conference should lift the moratorium placed on presbyters blessing couples entering into a Civil Union and that they should be allowed to function pastorally in terms of their personal conscience. This decision would not entitle presbyters to conduct a Civil Union ceremony legally but would enable them to perform their pastoral role to the couples.

The third matter requiring the continued attention of the MCSA is to revisit the financial model, described in Chapter 3, section 3.3, that is based on functioning as a connexion with funding raised by a Circuit Assessment levied on every circuit. The benefits due to each presbyter within this connexional model are dependent on the monthly assessment being paid by the circuit in which the presbyter is stationed and then disbursed in proportion to the

assessments received. Increasingly, circuits are not able to meet their monthly assessment, and other sources of income to meet these shortfalls are limited. Failure to meet that assessment has consequences for both the presbyter stationed in that circuit and the circuit itself, including the non-payment of benefits due to the presbyter (MCSA 2016a:111-113) and the loss of benefits on the retirement of the presbyter. The adoption of an Africanised model provides the opportunity for the MCSA to task the Finance Unit to review the financial model on which the church operates as well as that of the financial packages for presbyters.

The present financial model impacts a presbyter entering into Full Connexion and a covenantal relationship with the Conference. In terms of the covenantal relationship, no claim may be made by a presbyter against the MCSA "in respect of the payment of stipends, allowances or any other material benefit, in cash or kind, the provision of a station or any benefit of any kind which may have at any stage accrued to a Minister" (MCSA 2016a:30). The MCSA is, therefore, under no obligation to sustain, care for and support the presbyter.

However, the centrality of communality in African culture, the care and support members of the community give one another and the numerous roles communalism fulfils by imparting vitality to our southern African culture are not at odds with the Methodist element of connexionalism and the Christian principle that those who have should assist those who do not have. An Africanised model should incorporate a greater sense of communalism and community care when a presbyter is stationed by the Conference and is then negatively impacted as a consequence of the financial model of the church.

The growing trend of urbanisation in southern Africa; the increasing difficulty of rural and urban circuits to fund their assessments; presbyters not receiving their stipends with reduced pension benefits; the meagre pensions received by some pensioners; and the annual increase in pensions being below the CPI (MCSA 2019a:34); mean that a different financial model needs to be developed. The MCSA is, therefore, encouraged to investigate an alternative financial model by reviewing their understanding that the MCSA is only committed "to the provision of opportunities of service" (MCSA 2016a:37) and by accepting more responsibility for the financial well-being of presbyters stationed by the Connexional Executive and the Conference. Such a review would be in the interests of an improved, Africanised model of ordination.

The proposal by Williams and Bentley (2016:14-29) to be considered is that "if the MCSA enters into a covenantal relationship with a Presbyter, it needs to commit to seeing to their

basic needs, namely a station, a stipend and allowances, medical care, pension benefits and the ongoing spiritual nurturing of the Presbyter. If a Presbyter is not holding to their side of the covenantal agreement, then they should be subject to evaluation and possibly discipline" (Williams & Bentley 2016:28). This proposal would appear to be more just and in keeping with African ingredients being placed into the cooking pot. For such a change to take place, the Conference would need to task DEWCOM to investigate the theology of the covenantal relationship in the MCSA and then to make their recommendations to be placed before the Conference.

In conclusion, the three elements requiring the ongoing attention of the MCSA have been raised with the awareness that the MCSA has placed these ingredients into the cooking pot but that they require further consideration as well as constant monitoring. The continued message must be that patriarchy and marginalisation of women presbyters are unacceptable and that sexual discrimination in any form is not to be tolerated. An alternative model of funding and remunerating presbyters should be examined so that the financial pressures which presbyters, supernumerary ministers and their families are facing receive greater attention in the itinerant stationing system of the MCSA and that the position of those members in poorer and rural situations will not be jeopardised.

This study will now turn to a crucial aspect of the Africanisation of ordination: namely that all ministries must be oriented towards the mission and not the maintenance of the Christian Church. The requisite core concept in an Africanised doctrine of ordination is the centrality of mission above maintenance.

6.5 A renewed emphasis on mission above maintenance

While not specifically an African cultural phenomenon, fundamental to a decolonised and Africanised doctrine of ordination is the need for a renewed emphasis on the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ and, consequently, of the MCSA. An Africanised doctrine of ordination needs to place mission above maintenance as the priority of ministry by the presbyters and the laity of the MCSA.

The mission of the Christian Church is to continue the work begun in and through Jesus Christ of establishing the Kingdom of God and is grounded in the Christian Scriptures. A model is founded in texts such as Matthew 28:18-20 with the injunction of Jesus Christ to "Go and make disciples of all nations…." Another is the Pauline model of 1 Corinthians

9:19-23 in which the apostle Paul states: "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law…. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak.... I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings" (The New International Version). Both models are equally valid and necessary for the Christian Church to fulfil God's call to mission.

Central to mission is the understanding that God acts and becomes incarnate in God's world and the life situations of God's people in order to transform and bring about God's *shalom*, God's well-being. The mission of the Christian Church belongs to God and arises from those who share God's vision and are responding to God's call to establish the Kingdom of God. The synopsis provided by Bentley (2008:156-165) is helpful in stating that "a theology of mission thus speaks of God's self-revelation, God's concern for the world and a way of being church which enables each person who calls themselves a Christ-follower to have the confidence to respond in obedience to God's call upon their life. This obedience leads to the visible engaging of God's Word with this world" (Bentley 2008:165). This means that "the church exists for the sake of the Kingdom of God. The church itself is not the Kingdom. Its mission is to point to the Christ who makes the Kingdom possible" (2008:164).

The view of Bentley is supported by de Gruchy and Chirongoma (2008:291-305) who declare that "the church finds its meaning and existence in faithful response to what God is doing in the world. The *missiones ecclesia* is thus a response to the *missio Dei*" (de Gruchy & Chirongoma 2008:300-301). The mission of the Church is clearly central to the ministry of the Christian Church, is context-driven and dynamic, needing to be constantly re-aligned with changing contexts and circumstances. "The core of Christian ministry, therefore, whatever form it may take, is to continue the mission of Christ by embodying the ongoing compassionate response of God for all in need of healing love and saving mercy" (Au 1995:398).[157]

If mission is at the core of ministry, then the centrality of mission must be prominent in the narrative of the MCSA and, more specifically, in an Africanised doctrine of ordination. The commitment to mission needs to be instilled within every presbyter in the light of the disturbing *Listening Committee Report* (MCSA 2016c:1-4) of the Mission Congress of 2016 which draws our attention to "our inability or unwillingness to support transformative missional strides" (MCSA 2016c:2). In order to grasp the deeper meaning of this statement, a

[157] See also Macquarrie 1977: 441-446.

review of the processes undertaken by the MCSA in transforming the MCSA from a maintenance to a mission oriented model will follow.

6.5.1 The journey from maintenance to mission

It was early in the 1940s that the then Methodist Church of South Africa redefined the mission strategy and objective of the church and formally placed the mission work of the church in a fully-developed Missionary Department, accountable to the Conference for all its operations. The work of the Missionary Department included the Methodist Medical Missionary work at hospitals and clinics, the use of Missionary Boxes for fund-raising and amending the name of the Missionary Fund to the Missionary and Extension Fund, to facilitate the funding of mission outreach projects (MethSA 1944:30-32).

The next significant development was in response to the changing political arena in South Africa during the 1990s, leading to a radical change in approach to ministry by the MCSA for a church which was intimately involved in the anti-apartheid struggle. The MCSA now had to determine its mission and purpose within the new southern African context. The Conference of 1998 was chaired by Bishop Dandala who was passionate about the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ. He ensured that the focus of the Conference was on mission in order that "at the imminent dawn of a New Millennium, we have laid the foundation and framework for the task of prophetic action emanating from mission" (MCSA 1998:4). The momentum gained at that Conference led to the formulation of the Mission Statement of the MCSA that "God calls the Methodist people to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ for healing and transformation" (MCSA 1999/2000:2). The Mission Statement then informed the formulation of the Vision Statement of the MCSA of "A Christ-healed Africa for the healing of Nations" (1999/2000:2).

The 1998 Conference re-emphasised the Six Calls of the Journey to the New Land Convocation of 1993, as stated in the *Yearbook* of 1997 (MCSA 1997a), namely:

1 A deepened spirituality in the life of our Church.
2 An assurance that our life is guided by God's mission.
3 A rediscovery of 'every member ministry', or the priesthood of all believers.
4 An engagement with what it means 'to be one so that the world may believe'.
5 A re-emphasis on servant-leadership and discernment as the model for ministry.
6 A redefinition and authentication of the role of the clergy in our Church (1997a:4).

The momentum set in motion at the 1998 Conference fed into the Mission Millennium Campaign with its emphases that the life and energy of the church are to be directed towards mission and not maintenance; that mission projects are to be aimed at the "alleviation of poverty, development and empowerment of the poor" (MCSA 1999/2000:44); and the importance of moral regeneration "built around a Methodist Moral Charter" (1999/2000:44). The Conference of 2001 re-affirmed the Four Imperatives of Mission which emerged from the Millennium Mission Campaign (MCSA 2002:40) while at the same time "stressed in the clearest and strongest terms that every local church needs to embrace and engage all four imperatives if we are to be faithful to this mission calling" (MCSA 2004a:220). The *Yearbook* of 2006 (MCSA 2006) describes the Four Imperatives of Mission as:

> Evangelism and Church Growth
> Spirituality
> Justice and Service
> Human and Economic Development and Empowerment (MCSA 2006:2).[158]

The conclusion to be drawn is that "to speak about mission is to speak about the core of the church's role in this world" (Bentley 2008:156).

The accent on the centrality of mission continued with the Conference of 2003 (MCSA 2004a) which resolved that:

> a Connexional Mission Congress be convened for 2004. The primary purpose of the Mission Congress shall be to explore ways for the MCSA at every level to faithfully and fruitfully implement the objectives of the Mission and Vision Statements of the church within the framework of the mission imperatives. The Mission Congress is also directed to identify stumbling-blocks and obstacles to mission within the MCSA and formulate appropriate responses (MCSA 2004a:37).

The Mission Congress was held in 2004 with the formulation of the Mission Charter (MCSA 2004b:1-2) which was adopted by the Conference of 2005 and would set the mission agenda for the future of the church and the roles of both clergy and laity. The Charter defines numerous areas in which the imperatives for mission should be implemented, including evangelisation, Christian education, becoming a church in solidarity with the poor, implementing anti-bias training and, most relevant to this study: "[d]eepening our understanding of African and other spiritualities" while "training ministers for the African continent" (MCSA 2004b:1).

[158] The *Yearbook* of 2013 (MCSA 2013) reflects the addition of a fifth imperative, namely Education and Christian Transformation.

The Mission Charter (MCSA 2004b:1-2) calls on every member of the MCSA to put ourselves at God's disposal to carry forward God's mission in this sub-continent:

> Let us each renew our personal commitment to Jesus Christ and seek to grow in grace and in love for God, one another and the world.
>
> Let us ensure that our mission of healing and transformation is holistic, embracing all the imperatives for mission.
>
> Let us participate in God's mission in ways that are appropriate to our local contexts and in partnership with the wider church and community.
>
> Let us celebrate our diversity and the gifts God has given to each of us; support each other; challenge each other and pray for each other (2004b:2).

Vika (2008:58-69) states that: "In a nutshell the Mission Congress represents a concerted effort to move the whole church from maintenance to Mission" (Vika 2008:59). The emphases in ministry also moved from a clergy-dominated ministry to a shared ministry and the acceptance of a ministry aimed at "reconstructing and developing society" (Forster 2008:417) in the new southern African dispensation. Forster (2008:411–434) also draws our attention to the fact that, should the church wish "to actively participate in God's plan for the renewal and transformation of Southern African society, it would need to engage far more actively in practical acts of servanthood and ministry outside of the confines of the traditional church" (2008:415).

Significantly, the emphasis on mission by the Presiding Bishop, Rev Dandala, continued under his successor, Bishop Abrahams, who had served as the Director of the Church's Mission Unit.[159] In his address to the Connexional Executive of 2004, titled "Unblurring our vision: A Christ-Healed Africa for the Healing of Nations" (Abrahams 2005:7-21), Abrahams stated: "Our clergy are the primary custodians of our Vision and Mission. A radical change of attitude of some clergy is needed if we truly want to be agents of healing and transformation in church and society" (Abrahams 2005:14).

Year after year, the *Yearbooks* reflect the emphasis and priority of mission by the MCSA under the direction of the Mission Unit with the Unit Director forming part of the staff of the Office of the Presiding Bishop. The Mission and Vision Statements of the MCSA, together with the five Imperatives of Mission and Our Continuing Goals of Transformation, continue to be presented as the first items recorded in the annual *Yearbook*, as for example the

[159] From 1997 the Missionary Department became a Unit of the church together with those of Youth, Justice and Service (MethSA 1997:6).

Yearbook of 2019 (MCSA 2019a:2-4), indicating the importance placed by the MCSA on the church being mission-driven.

In 2016, the MCSA held another Mission Congress to evaluate the church's progress in fulfilling the 2004 mandate and to plan for the years ahead. The *Listening Committee Report* of the 2016 Mission Congress (MCSA 2016c:1-4), disconcertingly, placed before the MCSA the challenge of "our inability or unwillingness to support transformative missional strides" (MCSA 2016c:2) and "that we have allowed a disjuncture between the Mission Congress 2004 and the Mission Congress 2016" (2016c:2).

The *Listening Committee Report* (MCSA 2016c:1-4) leaves us in no doubt that, while there has been a significant a shift within the MCSA to be mission-dominated and oriented, this has not been welcomed and implemented in all areas of the life of the church. The mission emphasis of the MCSA needs to be constantly re-appraised in order to be relevant in every context in which ministry takes place. The challenge of the 2016 Mission Congress was that "Christ calls us to ask new questions as we continue to explore and examine the relevance of our mission strategy" (MCSA 2016c:2) that "Christ calls us to unity in diversity" (2016c:3) and that "Christ calls us to intentional ecumenical and inter-faith relationships, as well as partnering with other life-giving organisations" (2016c:3).

6.5.2 Implications of being mission-minded

The natural question to be answered is how this change could be implemented within an Africanised MCSA and the doctrine of ordination. The guide provided by de Gruchy (2010:42-50) is helpful when he draws our attention to the fact that "[t]he point is not simply to critique and bemoan one's history, but to seek ways to reshape it in creative and energetic ways… and therefore each generation has to think carefully about what it means here and now" (de Gruchy 2010:49). Unless the African model of ordination leads to thinking creatively about the changing circumstances ministry is facing in the light of God's call to establishing God's Kingdom, the church will continue using the models and methods from the past that rely on maintenance above mission.

It is my belief that it is critical for the thinking and methodology of the ministry of every presbyter to be refashioned from a ministry of maintenance to one of mission and servanthood, remembering that "mission is not something that belongs to the church. It belongs to God. God is a missionary God, a sending God. This *missio Dei* configures the

missiones ecclesia, in that the triune God calls and sends the people of God into the world, to live and work amongst all God's people" (de Gruchy 2010:42). Unless the priority of mission is inculcated during the formation of presbyters and continues during their ministry, a narrative of maintenance trumping eclipsing mission will continue in the MCSA. Consequently, it is important for presbyters, both in their initial formation at SMMS and during their Continuing Ministerial Formation (MCSA 2018a:94-95), to be equipped and held accountable for a mission-driven ministry in our changing context and, more particularly, in our African context.

A further implication is that an Africanised model requires presbyters to undergo a mind-shift in their approach to mission ministry that is different from a decade ago and one that includes the laity in that ministry. In keeping with the statement of Stallings (2013:69-85) that "a Wesleyan ecclesiology must certainly mean a Church grounded in missional evangelicalism" (Stallings 2013:72), a decolonised and Africanised doctrine of ordination must be founded and built on a sending God calling both clergy and laity to establish the Kingdom of God wherever their influence comes to bear, both within the church and in society at large.

Mission today cannot follow the same course as when the Methodist work was initiated in southern Africa, let alone the model adopted in past decades. The question posed by Bentley (2008:156-165): "What happens to the church when its context changes?" (Bentley 2008:158) is an important one for consideration by the MCSA. An appropriate observation is that by Taylor (2008:40-57) that "authentic mission should never involve entering a context with pre-set ideas and strategies but rather with this openness to encountering God through dialogue, within the context" (Taylor 2008:48). In addition, the MCSA needs to beware of falling into the same trap as did the colonial missionaries by not being sensitive to southern African cultural and religious customs. Consequently, their actions and decisions disadvantaged the indigenous people.

An example of a changing context which the MCSA needs to resolve is one posed by the Presiding Bishop in asking "how is ordination responding to the context of the underprivileged and economic deprivation of some areas? How does ordination respond to the needs of those communities which can't afford an ordained minister?" (Siwa 2018). Associated with his concern is that of Storey (2014:1-22) who notes that "the millions of struggling human beings in the inner cities and the informal settlements is hardly being touched" (Storey 2014:86) as a consequence of urbanisation in southern Africa.

There have been various attempts by the MCSA at finding solutions to these missional problems. One attempt was the introduction of clergy persons who would have part-time secular employment and would, therefore, serve in a particular setting and not be available for the itinerant ministry. Consequently, the Non-Itinerant category of presbyters: "Full-time Non-Itinerant and Part-time Non-Itinerant"; came into existence (MCSA 2002:138) as well as non-stipendiary (self-supporting) ministers. Such clergy persons were in Full Connexion with the Conference, were appointed to their circuits by the Conference but were not itinerant. However, these categories were formally discontinued at the Conference of 2015 (MCSA 2016b:105).

Another attempt was that of the 2003 Conference in which a paper was prepared for discussion and comment by all Circuit Quarterly Meetings and District Synods, proposing "that the categories of non-itinerant and part-time ministers be replaced by a new category of ministers who are in 'limited connexion'" (MCSA 2004a:84-87). Such ministers would follow similar candidating procedures and requirements as for the itinerant ministry, only have a two or three year period of probation, be accepted by the Conference for ordination to the itinerant ministry but then be ordained in the District where they would serve and be stationed by the District Synod (2004a:85-86). This proposal was not accepted by the Conference.

A similar proposal was presented by Bishop Taylor in 2012 (Taylor 2012:1-2) in a discussion document before the Conference appointed EMMU sub-committee, proposing the establishment of an Order of Local Ministers which "would be created for ministers called to the local church to full- or part-time service, and in a stipendiary, or non-stipendiary capacity. The order would be structured to achieve the same objectives of the current NI [Non-Itinerant] category, but operate within a District, as opposed to the wider Connexion" (Taylor 2012:1). This proposal was also not adopted by the Conference.

The premise of the Presiding Bishop, therefore, continues that persons living in poor and outlying areas, persons who would be predominantly black members of the MCSA, are not receiving equal spiritual and pastoral care as other sections of the Methodist fraternity who are able to afford one or more presbyters. Ministry to the inner cities and informal settlements is similarly compromised. The Africanisation of ordination requires that the Conference review our stationing procedures to determine viable and credible alternatives to our present stationing practices and to draw up a proposed plan of action for consideration by the Conference and Connexion.

Another example of the MCSA needing to adapt to changing circumstances relates to the need for ministry and mission to meet the cultural diversity and plurality of beliefs and customs of the people of southern Africa in the light of the changing demographics and diverse cultures of congregations in our circuits. The challenge is that diversity requires decisions "about a particular way of being which needs continual exploration and affirmation no matter how difficult and uncomfortable that may become…. Diversity presents itself as a powerful mission opportunity and challenge. Living with diversity rather than overcoming it becomes a symbol of the Gospel… by not engaging in dialogue as a mere mission technique, but as an authentic and necessary way of sharing and communicating in a context of diversity" (Taylor 2008:45, 47). An Africanised doctrine of ordination requires that all presbyters be formed in a way that enables diversity to be welcomed and embraced. The formulations, training and praxis of our church need to reflect such diversity.

An associated change of mindset is the challenge that, in God's ministry, the MCSA is not to operate on its own and should include other organisations, faiths and denominations. Ministry in mission could, and should, include ministry with ecumenical bodies, religious forums and civil society organisations.

In summary, the African model of the doctrine of ordination must inculcate the centrality of God's mission to establish God's Kingdom through God's people, including presbyters and the laity of the MCSA. Mission must take precedence over maintenance in the life of the MCSA in the light of the adoption of the Mission Charter (MCSA 2004b:1-2) and the Imperatives of Mission which were re-affirmed at the Mission Congress of 2016.

In order that the priority of mission prevails in the MCSA, it is proposed that SMMS, in conjunction with EMMU, should ensure that the emphasis on mission is prioritised in the curriculum at the seminary. The compliance of each seminarian in this regard should also become part of their Formation Assessment processes (SMMS 2018:24) prior to the issuing of the SMMS Certificate of Completion of the Formation for Ministry Programme in their final year (2018:26). In a similar manner, EMMU should consider the possibility of this assessment being included in the bi-annual Review of Ministry (MCSA 2016a:42) of every presbyter.

The importance of the MCSA being a mission-oriented church which adapts and adopts various ministries according to the needs of the context must become the ingredient that

flavours and enhances the taste of all ingredients cooking in the African cooking pot of ordination.

6.6 Conclusion

The discussion in Chapters 2-4 indicates that many of the practices relating to ordination have been adapted from the colonial past but that further adaptations are required for the practices flowing from the doctrine of ordination to be distinctly African in character and expression. Chapter 5 proposes ways in which the Africanisation of the doctrinal element of ordination should be further adapted by the continued Africanisation of the institutional culture and dominant epistemology of the MCSA. In addition, the practices, ritual and narrative of the ordination service are to be Africanised with the adoption of elements from southern African culture. The findings confirm that it is in the Africanisation of the practices associated with and arising from the doctrine of ordination where the greatest contribution of southern African culture to the Africanisation project may be applied. In sections 6.1-6.2 of this chapter, proposals relating to the Afr**i**canisation of the practices of ordination are presented. The conclusion reached in each case is that, when the ingredients being grown in our African soil are placed into the cooking pot, the dish developed has a distinctly African flavour.

Attention has also been drawn to possible unintended consequences arising from the Africanised model as well as revisiting three key aspects requiring the ongoing attention of the MCSA in support of the Africanised doctrine and practices of ordination. Encapsulating all these proposals is the acceptance and expression of the principle that mission and not maintenance is foundational for all ministries of the MCSA and of every presbyter.

The concluding chapter will draw this study to a close and indicate how the Africanised model could be implemented and the possible consequences thereof.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 The context of the study

The Conference of 1992 responded to the need for changes to take place in the MCSA by supporting the call for the decolonisation and Africanisation of the denomination. The Conference defined Africanisation as "a discipline of study and application concerned with the perception and understanding of the Christian gospel, in terms of concepts, symbols, practices and ethos of the African peoples, in relation to the functioning of the Church in worship, teaching, preaching, sharing the gifts, building the body, evangelism and Christ in the world" (MCSA 1992:289). The desire of the Conference and the cries of people and organisations for decolonisation and Africanisation of the MCSA are pertinent in answering the research question: have the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA been effectively adapted from our colonial past to our southern African context?

The findings of the research show that, while there have been adaptations and amendments to both the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA, these remain close to those inherited from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England. The research has also established that many elements of the colonial doctrine and practices are not un-African and that many elements of southern African culture and spirituality are not un-Christian. However, the modifications already adopted are insufficient to justify the claim that they represent the doctrine and practices of "an authentic African Church" (MCSA 1994:376). The research also indicated that, with the assimilation of aspects of southern African culture and spirituality, both the doctrine and the practices could be more effectively adapted to our southern African context. Throughout the study, the cooking pot is likened to the ecclesiology of the MCSA and the ingredients being placed into the pot to produce the dish are the doctrine of ordination and its practices.

The Methodist work in southern Africa was initiated by the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England through the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) in the early 1800s. The ecclesiology, doctrines, governance, procedures from candidature to ordination, accountability of presbyters to the Conference and the practices relating to ordination

replicated those of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England. Accountability to the Conference in England continued until the holding of the first Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa in 1883. Thereafter, only matters of "new legislation" (MethSA 1946:313) were required to be referred to the Yearly Conference in England for their approval. It was only in 1927, with the passing of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa (Private Act) of 1927, that the South African Conference "became an independent and autonomous body in full control of all its Members and Properties" (MethSA 1946:312).

Together with the colonial ecclesiology, doctrine and practices, numerous seeds of colonialism were sown that flourished and negatively impacted the ministry of the Methodist denomination in southern Africa. The prevailing narrative was of the dominance of Western culture over African culture and a sense of superiority over the indigenous people who were regarded as heathen, with many of their traditional values, religious beliefs and cultural practices being rejected. The colonial narrative was compounded by a reticence to ordain women and indigenous preachers together with reluctance to appoint black preachers to positions of leadership. Consequently, fervent demands arose for all discriminatory practices to be abolished and for the doctrine and practices of ordination "to be cooked in African pots" (Abrahams 2007:7) in order to Africanise the doctrines and practices of the church.

The research problem has focused on whether a decolonised and Africanised ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination would be very different from and more appropriate to the present formulations and practices. The research problem has been investigated using the research question: have the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA been effectively adapted from our colonial past to our southern African context?

The research question, in turn, has been tested against the hypothesis that, if the mission of the MCSA is to be most effective as an authentic southern African church, then the theology and practices regarding ordination need to be amended to assimilate relevant knowledge, beliefs and practices sourced from southern African culture, African spirituality and an African narrative. The premise of the study is that, while many features in an Africanised model may remain consistent with those inherited from the colonial past, the perspectives of southern African spirituality and culture are not sufficiently incorporated into the ecclesiology, doctrines and practices of the MCSA. The methodology adopted is a theoretical literary study of primary and secondary sources supplemented by interviews and email

correspondence with significant leaders in the MCSA for clarification of the literary data and to learn from their insights on the Africanisation project.

In order to prove or disprove the hypothesis, Chapter 2 presented a historical overview of the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination in the Methodist movement demonstrating that, in England and southern Africa, both the doctrine and practices of ordination have been influenced by historical and circumstantial factors. The influences of Rev John Wesley; the establishment of the annual Conference and its supreme authority; the emphasis on connexionalism; the itinerant stationing of presbyters by the Conference; and the acceptance of those ordained into Full Connexion with the Conference are hallmarks of the Methodist movement's developing ecclesiology, doctrines and practices. The denomination insists that ordination is dependent on God's calling the preacher to the ministry of Word and Sacraments, followed by a time of formation, acceptance by the Conference and ordination by the laying on of hands by previously ordained presbyters and the prayer to the Holy Spirit. The chapter concluded by tracing the ecclesiology and the doctrine of ordination as the Methodist denomination became established on southern African soil.

The impact of the colonial influences on the doctrine and practices of ordination in the Southern African Connexion were explored in Chapter 3, sections 3.1-3.4, indicating that colonialism led to the creation of parallel structures based on ethnicity, separated ministerial training, separate Synod sessions and ordination services and the marginalisation of black and women presbyters who were denied the opportunity to serve in positions of leadership. The more insidious and damaging consequences of colonialism were the negative and enslaving impact on the worth, thinking and being of black persons. Colonialism "made them a conquered people and empty shells that accepted everything coming their way" (Lephakga 2015:146).

In response to the impact of colonialism, a demand arose from within the Christian Church and society for a decolonised and Africanised southern African society and a decolonised Methodist denomination. A number of adaptations took place within the MCSA resulting in ethnicity no longer being a determining factor in the appointments, leadership and training of presbyters; in the conducting of separate synods and ordination services; a greater commitment to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers; as well as a rejection of paternalism and gender discrimination. However, Chapter 3, sections 3.1-3.5 also indicated that, in spite of the adaptations adopted by the MCSA, the ethos, epistemology and culture of the MCSA have remained European and Western. The findings also concluded that there are

aspects of the doctrine and practices of ordination which have not been adequately transformed and adapted from our colonial past.

The need for both decolonisation and Africanisation of the MCSA and the contributions a southern African culture would offer the MCSA by means of the decolonising and Africanisation project was described in Chapter 4, sections 4.1-4.3. The influences and the contributions of Black Consciousness philosophy, Black Theology of liberation and both Western and African Feminist theology in the cry for decolonisation and Africanisation were considered. The importance of the 1958 declaration of the Methodist Church of South Africa to be "one and undivided" (MethSA 1958:202) was a decisive moment in the Africanisation of the Methodist denomination. Black and white members could now enjoying equal standing within the MCSA. No distinction was to be drawn between the statuses of ordained black and white clergy persons. And, importantly, the church would not be split into different sections based on race. The formation of the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC) in the 1970s, together with their input and pressure for change, assisted in the transformation of the MCSA into a unified, multi-cultural and multi-racial church.

The contributions that southern African culture and spirituality offer to the Africanisation project were explored in relation to the doctrine and practices of ordination, the ordination service and governance of the denomination. The possible pitfalls and negative impact of an African epistemology and culture; for example, the sacralisation of authority and patriarchy, were also considered. As the formation of presbyters is cardinal in the Africanisation project, the strengths and weaknesses of the formation programme and the continuing European epistemology at the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS) and in the MCSA were investigated in Chapter 4, section 4.4.

Certain conclusions can be drawn when analysing the data presented in the four chapters. The first was that adaptations in Methodist polity to both the doctrine and the practices of ordination are acceptable in order to meet the needs of people when circumstances change. All proposals for amendments are required to be submitted to the relevant church structures for investigation and presentation to the Conference for their consideration and approval. The second was that none of the elements of the doctrine and practices of ordination are at variance with southern African culture and spirituality and that they are able to make meaningful contributions to an Africanised model of ordination. The significant third conclusion was that the MCSA has not effectively adapted the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination from our colonial past to our southern African context. Additional adaptations,

drawn from southern African culture and spirituality, need to be assimilated and contextualised into the doctrine and practices of ordination. The understanding is that more vigorous assimilation of aspects of southern African culture will more effectively transform the taste of the dish cooking in the pot from one with a predominantly Western flavour to one that is predominantly African.

As the principle of sound theologising is that doctrine determines practice, and what we believe leads to how we act, Chapter 5 examined the doctrinal elements of the doctrine of ordination in the MCSA utilising the liturgy of the 2018 *Ordination Service* (MCSA 2018d:1-11). Chapter 6 then examined the practices of ordination in order to determine how and where aspects of southern African culture would further enrich an Africanised model of ordination.

Each element constituting the doctrine of ordination was appraised in terms of its congruency with African culture and religion; whether each has been adequately Africanised from our colonial past and how aspects of southern African culture could contribute to the Africanisation project. Two examples of proposed amendments relating to the doctrine of ordination are noted. The first is the participation of the Lay President in the laying on of hands at ordination, in keeping with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, and the southern African cultural practice of communalism. The second is of lifting the restrictions placed by the Conference on presbyters entering into a Civil Union on the grounds of their sexual orientation and of allowing them to conduct the ceremonies of couples in a same-sex relationship on the grounds of the Methodist Church's understanding that the church is in "a journey of discovering what it means to be part of a church which embraces many different and even opposing views" (MCSA 2006:75).

The study indicated that the greatest opportunity to influence the Africanisation of ordination is in the practices arising from and associated with ordination. Chapter 6, sections 6.1-6.2, indicated how increasing the ingredients being grown in our southern African soil and applied to the practices of ordination will significantly contribute to the Africanisation project when placed into the cooking pot. One example is in adapting the liturgy of the ordination service to be distinctly African in expression while remaining Methodist and Christian in expression. Thereafter, important aspects relating to the practices in an Africanised model of ordination requiring ongoing attention were presented in sections 6.3-6.5. The chapter and the study concluded by asserting that ordination tasks presbyters, together with the laity, to place the mission above maintenance of the ministry of the church in order to fulfil the God-given task of establishing the Kingdom of God.

The methodology of the research was a theoretical literary study of published and unpublished works supplemented with interviews conducted with eight significant leaders of the MCSA. The questions asked of each person were not generic to all participants but specific to their position of leadership in the MCSA in order to clarify specific aspects of decolonisation and Africanisation in the MCSA and for them to offer their insights into the aspects of African culture relevant to the research question. I also entered into email correspondence with some presbyters in order to acquire additional information or to clarify an aspect within their sphere of influence. The interviews were conducted according to the requirements specified in the Research Ethics Certificate of Unisa utilising the methods and procedures stipulated in the approved application. The data obtained from those interviewed confirmed the preliminary findings of the literary study of primary and secondary sources as well as providing additional data that was helpful in assessing and adding to the literary study.

7.2 Evaluation of the hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study is that, if the mission of the MCSA is to be optimally effective as an authentic southern African church, then the theology and practices regarding ordination need to be amended to assimilate relevant aspects of southern African culture, African spirituality and an African narrative as important sources of knowledge, beliefs and practices (Chapter 1, section 1.5).

The data on which the hypothesis is confirmed rests on the findings that our present model remains consistent with and closely aligned to the model of the doctrine and practices of ordination inherited from our colonial past. The data also confirms that southern African spirituality and culture are not adequately incorporated into the present model and that the further introduction and assimilation of such features would enhance an Africanised model of ordination as well as the effectiveness of the witness and mission of the MCSA. When the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination, together with the assimilation of associated African cultural practices and an African epistemology are placed into the African cooking pot, the witness and mission of the MCSA will be clearly that of an “authentic African church” (MCSA 1994:376).

The justification for these findings includes the discovery that each element relating to the doctrine and to the practices of ordination are congruent with southern African culture and

spirituality. When suitably assimilated, they would provide a richer and more expressive narrative to each element. Ingredients grown in African soil being introduced into the pot would provide an African flavour to the doctrine and practices of ordination. An example cited in Chapter 5, section 5.1, in support of the element of the priesthood of all believers could be drawn from the Zulu culture where the head chief chooses an *izinduna*, an ambassador/spokesperson, and sends that person out to call the community to a community gathering at a specific venue. As the chief's messenger, this person carries the authority of the chief in delivering the message and then participates in that gathering as a community member in order to foster the well-being of the greater community.

The concept of communalism is very strong in southern African culture and, when adopted and adapted into the doctrine of ordination, could lead to an amendment in the doctrinal aspect of ordination. An example relating to the reintroduction of the Lay President participating in the laying on of hands at the ordination of presbyters in keeping with the cultural element of communalism is cited in Chapter 6, section 6.2.6. The cultural element of communalism is consistent with the resolution of the Conference of 2001 that: "Because ordination is an act of the whole Church it is important that the ordaining presbyters (elders) include both lay and ordained persons" (MCSA 2002:13). This resolution was never officially rescinded.

7.3 The contribution of this study

It was during my research into the covenantal relationship entered into between the MCSA and her ministers on their ordination that the question arose as to how the colonial past has influenced the understanding of the doctrine of the ordination of presbyters in the MCSA. That challenge led to this study as there was a limited record[160] on the topic of decolonisation and Africanisation of ordination in the MCSA. Being a Methodist presbyter, I decided to approach the research from a specifically Methodist perspective, one that is, therefore, unique and timeous for the MCSA.

My contribution is an evaluation of the impact of the assimilation of southern African culture in the Africanising of the doctrine and practices of ordination in the MCSA, proposing what an Africanised model of ordination would look like, the implications of such a change and the manner of implementing the changes. An Africanised model requires the extensive

[160] These include Richardson 2007: 131-152; Vika 2008:58-69 and Bailie 2009.

assimilation and application of African culture into the doctrine and practices of ordination, a task beyond the scope of this study but one in which the foundations have been laid for future research.

There are two important matters relating to the enriched Africanised model that need to be clarified. The first is that the required amendments must be guided by the doctrine and decisions of the annual Conference, Methodist emphases and practices; and the ethos of the MCSA. The model must remain in keeping with the theology of the Christian Church, particularly with those denominations with whom the MCSA is in an ecumenical relationship. The doctrine will, therefore, be in alignment with Scripture; Christian theology; Methodist tradition and heritage; published editions of the *Minutes*, *Yearbooks* and the most recent edition of the *Methodist Book of Order: The Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa*; Conference presentations and Unit reports. The second is that all considerations must be undergirded by the desire to improve the effectiveness of the mission of the Church of Christ through the combined ministry of the presbyters and the laity of the MCSA.

In terms of Methodist procedures that all amendments to doctrine and practices require the authorisation of the Conference before implementation, each proposal included in the study and those arising from future studies will need to be presented to the Conference for their deliberation and approval.

The prayer following the ordination of presbyters in the ordination service (MCSA 2018d:1-11) encapsulates God's call on certain individuals to the ordained ministry of Word and Sacraments, to act as God's servants with the commission of extending God's Kingdom. That prayer is appropriate in concluding this study, with the Presiding Bishop praying:

> Endue these your servants with the Spirit of wisdom and love, of power and a sound mind. Make them and keep them simple in character, pure in heart, clear in judgment, unselfish and earnest in purpose, and lowly in personal claim. As you have brought them to this holy hour, so lead them in the days to come, that your word of life may speak through them, that your love and grace may be seen in them, and that the mind which was in Christ Jesus may also be found in them. Amid praise and blame, success and failure, may they in all things so fulfil their ministry that, when their day's work is done, they may stand before their Master and enter into the joy of their Lord (MCSA 2018d:6).

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Robertson, R., 2019. Email, 14 January 2019, ronrobertsonsa@gmail.com.

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Sprong, J.L., 2019. Email, 06 February 2019, jen.aquaria@gmail.com.

Interviews

Abrahams, I.M., 2018. Past Presiding Bishop of the MCSA and presently serving as the General Secretary of the World Methodist Council. Telephonic interview on 16 October 2018 at 19h30.

Malinga, N.P., 2018. Director of the Education for Ministry and Mission Unit of the MCSA. Telephonic interview on 24 October 2018 at 14h00.

Mntambo, T.V., 2018. Bishop of the Limpopo Synod of the MCSA. Telephonic interview on 23 November 2018 at 12h30.

Molo, W.M., 2018. Methodist presbyter and Chairman of the Black Methodist Consultation of the MCSA. Telephonic interview on 25 October 2018 at 16h00.

Morgan, C., 2018b. General Secretary of the MCSA. Telephonic interview on 23 November 2018 at 10h00 together with Bishop Siwa.

Nyobole, V.G., 2018b. Past General Secretary of the MCSA and presently serving as the President of the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary. Telephonic interview on 2 October 2018 at 14h00.

Sifo, L.G., 2018. Dean of the Chapel and Head of Formation at the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary. Telephonic interview on 19 October 2018 at 10h00.

Siwa, Z.D., 2018. Presiding Bishop of the MCSA. Telephonic interview on 23 November 2018 at 10h00 together with Rev Morgan.

Attachments

Attachment 1 - Approach and information letter to prospective participants

Rev Donald Williams
PO Box 19105
The Village. 1218
Date

Research project - The decolonisation of ordination: "Cooking the Methodist doctrine of ordination in African pots".

Dear ……..

I am Donald Williams, a retired minister of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Under the guidance of Professor W. Bentley and Dr T. Lephakga, I am undertaking a Doctoral study through the University of South Africa and do so with the approval of the Presiding Bishop.

Purpose of the research

The research relates to the theology of ordination in the MCSA with the title of the research project as "The decolonisation of ordination: "Cooking the Methodist doctrine of ordination in African pots". I am conducting this research to explore a decolonised doctrine of ordination in the MCSA with the research question stated as, "Has the MCSA effectively adapted the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination from our colonial past to our Southern African context?" My contribution is to look specifically at what the decolonisation of ordination in the MCSA will look like, the implications of such a change and the manner of implementing the changes.

I, therefore, am approaching you with your significant knowledge and experience of Methodist tradition, theology and polity to assist in reviewing our doctrine and practices in the light of the call for the MCSA to become 'an authentic African church' (MCSA 1994:376).

Voluntary Participation

The proposal is to interview about ten presbyters of the MCSA who have served or presently serve in positions of leadership in the MCSA and whose names and contact details have been obtained from the Yearbook & Directory of 2018. Having served as our Presiding Bishop, I value your wisdom and insights and am inviting you to be part of this study.

Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from the process at any stage and have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview. You will not be provided with an incentive to take part in the research and there should be no costs incurred by you other than your time spent during the interview. Whilst there will be no direct benefit for you, your participation will help contribute to the desire of the MCSA to be true to our African context.

The interviews will not be analysed as an empirical study but to gain from your insights in order to enhance and supplement the theoretical study. For that reason, I am asking permission to utilise your responses in my thesis and also in any future journal articles or conference proceedings. Your responses will be appropriately referenced.

Procedures

In order to gain from your insights, I wish to conduct an interview with you, either in your office, telephonically or using email. Due to travelling constraints and distances from Nelspruit, my preference is a telephone conversation at your convenience, using a Telkom landline. However, I am also open to the other options mentioned in this paragraph.

In the interview, I wish to discern your insights relating to the impact of colonialism on our doctrine and practices of ordination and the contribution of Africanisation in transforming our doctrine and practices. Our discussion will concentrate on three major categories:

- What elements in our **doctrine** of ordination do you believe need to be decolonised?
- What ingredients from our **Southern African culture** do you believe should be placed into the pot to Africanise our doctrine and practices of ordination?
- What elements relating to our **practices of ordination** do you believe need to be applied differently in order to implement a decolonised model?

Notes will be written during the interview and I need your permission to record the interview electronically. My notes and the relevant portions of transcripts will be written up by me using the recordings for clarification purposes. All electronic data will be transferred to a memory stick that will be secured in a fire-proof safe for a period of 2 years and then destroyed. The same protocol will apply to hard copies of documents related to the interview.

Should you so desire, I am offering to make the relevant portions pertaining to your insights available to you, in electronic format, for comment or correction before being incorporated into the thesis for presentation to the University of South Africa?

Who to Contact

This study has received the approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of Unisa. However, should you wish to contact my promoter relating to this study, please contact Prof Wessel Bentley on 012 429 4026, 082 374 4360 or bentlw1@unisa.ac.za.

I would appreciate your participation in evaluating the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination in the MCSA and ask you to participate by submitting the information requested on the Biographic Details form (**Attachment 3**) and the Consent to participate form (**Attachment 4)** and I will then make contact with you. However, if it is your preference to refer me to someone else for the interview, please be so kind as to make contact with me in that regard.

With kind regards

Rev Don Williams
082 392 1762 or 013 744 0538
Email: donwill@telkomsa.net

Attachment 2: Biographic Details form

BIOGRAPHIC DETAILS

First names and Surname:_____

By which name do you wish to be addressed? _____

Present position in the MCSA:

Contact details:

Home telephone: _____ Work telephone: _____

Cellular: _____

E-mail address: _____

Postal address: _____

Please return to Donald Williams at donwill@telkomsa.net in order to arrange an appropriate time for an interview.

Attachment 3: Consent to participate in this study form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that **Donald Murrell Williams**, a student at the University of South Africa, has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation in the research project.

I declare the following:

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information letter received by me.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, thesis, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I grant permission for my responses to be quoted and referenced in publications arising from the interview but that my participation will be kept confidential should that be my preference.

I agree that the interview may be recorded by means of an electronic device and that notes will be taken during the interview for transcribing by the researcher.

I have received a signed copy of this informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname…… (please print)

Participant Signature……..Date……

Researcher's Name & Surname: Donald Murrell Williams

Researcher's signature……..Date……

Contact details of Dr Wessel Bentley (supervisor): bentlw@unisa.ac.za and Dr Tshepo Lephakga (co-supervisor): lephat@unisa.ac.za.

Attachment 4: Discussion topics and sample questions for the interview

The discussion during our interview will assist in clarifying specific matters relating to the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination in the MCSA. I will also seek your insights and suggestions regarding any changes that should be considered by Conference on how the doctrine and practices can be amended to our Southern African context. The questions put to you will be specifically related to your area of expertise and experience in the MCSA.

Discussion relating to the ecclesiology and doctrine of ordination will, possibly, relate to:

- What aspects of Methodist ecclesiology and the doctrine of ordination in the MCSA are regarded as immutable? What aspects should be reconsidered? What might be the implications of a revised ecclesiology?
- If presbyters are ordained into the Order of Presbyters, what is the relationship of ordination to:
  being accepted into Full Connexion;
  the covenantal relationship;
  accountability of presbyters and the Conference to each other; and
  the place and/or need for a Ministerial Session of Synod and Conference?
- How are power and status being abused? How are people being discriminated against in the MCSA?
- What aspects of colonialism and a Western epistemology have negatively impacted the present ecclesiology of the MCSA?
- What aspects of African epistemology and culture should be considered for incorporation into the polity of the MCSA?
- What aspects of Methodist ecclesiology need to be amended?
- What do you believe a doctrine of ordination cooked in African pots should look like?
- What could be the impact and consequences of a changed ecclesiology?
- What additional aspects need to be researched? What additional insights do you have to contribute to the research?